University of Alberta

THE POSTCOLONIAL LANDSCAPE:
NEGOTIATING TEACHERS' IDENTITIES AROUND RACE AND CULTURE

by

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ABSTRACT

This research study focuses on how identities are negotiated within a postcolonial landscape. My own struggle in trying to locate myself culturally while working in a First Nations school caused me to wonder if other teachers shared similar experiences. I had the following questions: How do I, and other teachers of different ethnocultural backgrounds, negotiate our identities in a First Nations school? What common threads do we have that help us account for who we are as teachers? What are the implications for our students?

The resulting narratives, which describe past experiences of stereotyping, racial discrimination, and marginalization are examined in relation to racial, cultural, and identity theories, both historical and current. The study begins with my own autobiography in which I describe the confusion I felt in being perceived as culturally Ojibway because I had dark skin. In working with four other teachers of varying ethnocultural backgrounds, I conducted my research using a narrative inquiry space in which these teachers shared their memories.

The results of the study indicated four shared threads that contributed to our stronger sense of selfhood. The first thread was recognizing the significance of our individual family history that also served to point out the junction where colonialism began to shape our lives. The second and third threads delved into our identification with "white mainstream culture" and traditions through the English language and how these too shaped our identity. The last thread was our shared feeling about discrimination.

In achieving a more cohesive sense of self, the four teachers and I realized that opening up a dialogue allowed us to explore our tensions and sort out our feelings around race and culture. This exploration created a healing space for us. This study suggests that teachers from other cultural backgrounds may also want to take this journey for themselves in order to discover their own inner world of beliefs and values.

DEDICATION

In memory of my parents,

Joseph Jacobs

and

Martina Daybutch,

my first teachers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This dissertation is "rooted in friendship" to quote Mary Catherine Bateson (1989). Whenever I open its pages, I will be reminded of what I owe Dr. Jean Clandinin and Dr. Ingrid Johnston. I was indeed fortunate to have these two scholarly women as my advisors. I am grateful for the many hours they spent with me in discussing theory and implications. They were instrumental in helping me with the multiple revisions that were needed for each of the chapters of the dissertation. As I journeyed through my own personal memoried experiences around racial and cultural conflicts, Jean and Ingrid gave me the emotional support that I needed to examine these memories and then to continue my explorations with my participants. They also provided the intellectual support as I searched for other scholars who spoke on race and culture.

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Whenever I open the pages of my dissertation, I will also be reminded of what I owe to my four participants who gave a part of their own lives within its pages. Deanna, William, Mary, and Beth willingly shared their time and their memoried experiences with me and with the academic community. Their stories helped me with my own personal journey. Our many conversations led us to develop a closer friendship.

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I thank Mr. Marvin Assinewai, Unit Supervisor of the Sudbury Area Post Secondary Counselling Unit of the Nipissing Band of Ojibways, for his encouragement and support. It was through Marvin that I was able to financially complete my doctoral studies.

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Chapter One

My Postcolonial Landscape: Autobiography, Tensions, and Threads

Beginnings

Introduction

My personal family history is rooted within tensions of racial and cultural location. My paternal grandmother, Clara Deschamps, and my maternal grandmother, Mary Daybutch, both strong women, had to face the dilemma of location in an encroaching white society. From my vantage point as a granddaughter, it is not only possible to examine their history as I know it and its impact upon their lives as Native women, but also to consider how their lived experiences impacted my own notions of race, culture, and self. Both of these women were born in the early 1900s, one born of mixed heritage and the other Ojibway.

The story of Clara

Clara Deschamps, my paternal grandmother, was one of three children born to Mary Deschamps who herself was born in the late 1800s. Unfortunately, at this time, I am unable to locate Mary's maiden name but what I do recall is that it was Ojibway. The land that traditionally belonged to her ancestors was diminished to a small settlement called "Naughton Reserve" on the outskirts of Sudbury, Ontario. She was born and raised on this reserve. At about eighteen years of age, Mary married Louis Deschamps, a Frenchman. At that time, women who married a Non-Status were obligated to sell their Treaty Rights to Indian Affairs for a few dollars. In Mary's case, she was forced to leave her reserve, not only by the regulations of the Indian Act, but also, as I understood it, by her own people who turned their backs on her for marrying Louis Deschamps. At some time after the birth of her three children, Louis Deschamps disappeared out of Mary's life, either through death or desertion, I'm not sure which. She ended up in Nicholson, Ontario, a railway stop about thirty kilometres from Chapleau, Ontario. With the loss of her husband, she worked as a servant in the summer home of the Austins, a wealthy family who owned Austins Airways. The Austins were a "British-speaking" white family who came from Toronto, Ontario. Her job as a household servant would have given Mary knowledge of a different life than the one she was accustomed to on the reserve near Sudbury. As a result, she changed her perceptions of what was culturally acceptable to include such things as beautiful furniture, paintings, books, and so forth. Mary's expectation that her children could have a better life, if they possessed such artefacts, became crucial to her daughter Clara's understanding of self-worth.

Clara, Mary's daughter, was considered a Metis, a term used to describe one born of mixed heritage, Indian and French. Today, when I examine photographs of Clara, she has the bearing of a plump and beautiful-looking dark-featured woman. However, I know very little of my grandmother's early life other than that she never went to Indian residential school. She may have been home educated, but from what I remember of her, she spoke and read English as her first language when we, as children, were around. At times, I overheard her speak Ojibway to her husband, George Jacobs.

Clara's home exemplified her own inner conflict concerning culture. On the one hand, she furnished her home with beautiful silverware, dishes, and antiques within expensive oak cabinets and, on the other hand, her floors had plain linoleum. Her kitchen was heated by an old cook stove beside which lay a tub of wood. The rooms were lit with coal-oil lamps. In the summers I stayed there, I never noted one artefact that would have indicated her Native heritage. She knitted and sewed but did not do beadwork. Nor did she have moccasins or traditional outfits. Her sister, Della, married an Irishman and her brother married a Native woman, while she chose George Jacobs as her husband, a man who came from a reserve north of Sudbury. From this union, she gave birth to eleven children, two of whom died of childhood accidents. Her eldest child was my father, Joseph, born in November of 1920.

I know very little about my grandfather, George Jacobs, Clara's husband, as there were different stories about his ancestry. One story is that he was born of a Jewish father who owned a business in Sudbury and who would not marry George's mother because of the prejudices that existed against Native people. From what I was told, George's birth name was Ojibway. His mother apparently resided on a reserve about twenty kilometres north of Sudbury. Another story was that George and his sisters came from New York State to pick blueberries with his family in the Montreal area during the summer. One day, social workers picked up the children and shipped them off to orphanages. George lost track of his siblings and was raised by a Native woman. When George was a young man, he preferred the name of Jacobs. Another story is that when he served with the Canadian Armed Forces he was given the name of Jacobs. From photographs, George was a handsome man, medium height, olive-skinned with bright brown eyes within a wide forehead. Memories of my grandfather portrayed him to be wise, kind, and gentle.

Joseph Jacobs, my father, eldest son of Clara and George, learned Ojibway as his first language while living with Mary Deschamps, his maternal grandmother. She raised him from birth. The British influence was apparent when he went to First Form for at the age of seven, as he recalled, he wore a little jacket with breeches on his first day of school. Other students, including his siblings, laughed at him. My father never finished grade school. The story he told when he described why he did not finish school was that George Jacobs, his father, enlisted for the second time in the Armed Forces and went overseas. His mother, Clara, was left with eight children to feed and clothe and begged my dad to help with the care of his siblings. He worked hauling logs and gave most of the earnings to his family. Despite this obstacle, as he used to say, he enrolled in correspondence courses with Frontier College. His grandmother, Mary, had always encouraged him to better himself by getting his high school diploma and going to a post secondary institution. His dream, as a young boy, was to become an electrical engineer.

The story of Mary

Mary Daybutch, my maternal grandmother, was born in the late 1800s and resided in Mississauga Reserve situated on the outskirts of Blind River. I know very little about her, other than she married Neos Chiblow, a band member from the Mississauga Reserve. My mother claimed that Neos had “white” ancestry, possibly of German descent. During my mother's childhood, Mary left him for Dave Daybutch who gave his surname to her five children. Hence, my mother came to be known as Martina Marie Daybutch.

While my grandmother Clara seemed to turn away from her Native racial and cultural roots, Mary Daybutch chose to live out her life as an Ojibway woman. I recall spending a childhood summer at Biscotasing, at her small, barren two-bedroom home. I remember an old woodstove, plain table and chairs in a dimly lit room with two bedrooms off to one side. There were few pictures on the walls and no carpeting of any sort. She appeared to have done much of the craftwork that was scattered around such as sweetgrass baskets, toy birch bark canoes, moccasins, trap line paraphernalia, and quilled boxes. She spoke Ojibway, and not until her later years, did she begin to speak English.

Martina Daybutch, my mother, was born on the Mississauga Reserve in 1926. She seemed to have enjoyed her early years and remembers with horror how she was taken out of her home at six years of age and sent to what she called "a convent." For the entire year, she was housed in a residential school. When she returned home the following summer, she did not recognize her mother, for as she stood at the door, she recalls wondering to herself, "Who is that old Indian woman?" She remembers the confusion she felt as this poorly dressed and dark-skinned woman rushed towards her. For the next eight years, my mother went each year to this institution and returned the following summer. Her father, Neos Chiblow, who was intermittently involved with the family, left an impression of someone who was distant and unapproachable. Yet, my mom would tell stories of how her father, Neos, would farm, buy gifts for the children, and take her and her siblings on fishing trips. His infrequent visits were confusing for my mother.

As my mother grew up she became more resistant to the ways of the Ojibway people, refusing to speak the language that she learned as a young child and which would have been spoken at home. She learned to adhere to the tenets of the Roman Catholic faith taught at the residential school. She aspired to be a nun. Her long absences from home separated her from learning and maintaining cultural practices. As I look back on her stories, I believe that resentment towards her mother festered during this time. She would often comment that she was happy at the residential school for she learned practical and spiritual things but her tone of voice was bitter. There may have been other reasons for this tone but I believe that as a young girl she attributed much of her unhappiness to her mother's inability to keep her at home so that she could have an upbringing that other children enjoyed. My mother was unaware that many Native people in those days were rendered powerless by the educational legislation regarding Treaty Indian children. My mom left the residential school at the age of fifteen without becoming a nun. Because of her attitude towards her upbringing, she refused to acknowledge any of her Native relatives on the Mississauga Reserve. In fact, my first contact with the Mississauga Reserve came about when I was in my late thirties.

Martina Daybutch and Joseph Jacobs met in Chapleau and, after a year of courtship, they married, much against the wishes of Joseph's mother, Clara, who considered Martina beneath her son. My mother remembered overhearing Clara's complaint, "Oh, you're bringing an Indian into the house." It was with no regret that my mom gave up her Treaty Card upon marrying Joseph for now she would be classified as a "white woman." She told a story of how she sold her Treaty Card back to Indian Affairs for $5.00 before she obtained her marriage license.

The wedding party consisted of a maid of honour, Martina's cousin, and the best man, a close friend of Japanese ancestry. Neither set of parents attended the wedding. However, Martina's mother did send a beautiful and expensive place setting for eight with teapot and sugar bowl/creamer. Joseph's parents sent an expensive silverware set for eight encased in cherry wood. Starting out in life was a hardship for both my parents. My mother worked for the Hongs, a Chinese family, who owned their own restaurant. They offered a room for my mother and father at the top of their restaurant. My parents used to tell stories about their early life as a married couple and how the Hongs were so kind and gracious to them, providing them with free baby-sitting, food, and shelter. While Joseph took a job for the railroad to learn the trade of brakeman, Martina continued to work as waitress and dishwasher. Eventually Joseph left that job and returned to Nicholson taking his young family with him.

Their first child was brought into the world among nurses and family members at Chapleau Community Hospital. Kathleen was a bald-headed, fair-skinned healthy baby. Her hair eventually came in as blond curls and she had light-brown eyes. Apparently at this time, my paternal grandmother, Clara, commented that the child definitely was a Jacobs and, from this point on, she doted on this beautiful little girl.

I, on the other hand, slipped, unnoticed, into the family with a home birth one sunny spring morning in April, a year and a half later. My grandmother, Clara, who helped with the delivery, noted that the birth veil surrounding my head was remarkable and counselled my mother that this was a good omen. However, my grandmother, according to my mother, looked critically on my "Oriental" features. My father, who was working in a lumbering camp, came home several days later, after hearing the news of my birth. The events and comments surrounding my home birth and the attention my older sister received, created much tension for me as I was growing up.

Locating Race and Culture Within the Meaning of Identity

The difficulties that Clara Deschamps and my mother had in coming to terms with locating their own identity within mainstream culture in their day created much tension in my understanding of who I was, and where my identity was located in relation to race and culture. My lack of knowledge of Ojibway culture and language made it difficult for me to locate myself as an Anishinabe. In order to resolve my tensions I began a narrative inquiry into each of the three tensions of race, culture, and identity. I returned to my family history, to various points in my childhood, to the lived experiences of four teachers of varying backgrounds, writing my own and their reflections within the context of relevant theoretical understandings.

Tension #1 - Race

History and Theory of Race

Much has been written in recent years regarding the meaning of race. I selected several readings to illustrate how an attempt was made in early European history to use physiological differences as a way of classifying the human species on the basis of skin colour. This classification only contributed to the development of economic, social, political, and emotional constructions of race that placed those of darker skin in a subordinate and unsavoury role.

Friedman (1981) states that the use of the term race owes its existence to Pliny the Elder, a Roman natural scientist who died in A. D. 79, and who compiled information about the "fabulous beings of India and Ethiopia" (p. 8). This kind of information held its ground throughout the Middle Ages as natural scientists looked to the Old Testament for reasons for this difference of humanity. Friedman notes that in the early white Judeo-Christian culture it was believed that the fall of Adam contributed to a distinction in humanity. He says that the explanation for these differences in humanity "was often seen as the consequence not only of the Fall, but also of alien strains entering a tribal line of descent, so that the resulting people were less than fully human" (p. 89). Hence, darker-skinned people fell short of being truly human like those who were of European stock.

As scholars attempted to understand how humanity became divided on the basis of race and culture, new theories were needed to help explain this phenomenon. For example, Muir (1997), noted that as early as the seventeenth century the term race referred to physiological differences among people. He writes that,

> Reference to race first appeared in English in 1508 as *racis*, referring vaguely to categories of people, . . . and not used in connection with human taxonomy until 1684, when François Bernier, a French physician, noting differences in skin color, hair, and facial features on his travels, wrote of "four or five species or races of men." (pp. 96-97)

According to Corcos (1997) this new view of looking at the divisions of humanity was further supported by the work of Carl von Linné. Corcos says that Linné, the Swedish naturalist, "originated the taxonomic classification system" and "divided humanity into four distinct groups: American or red, European or white, Asiatic or yellow, and African or black" (p. 17). Corcos also notes that this classification also included "temperament, custom and habits" (p. 17). Furthermore, he emphasized that as a result of this classification, "(i)n the eighteenth century . . . pro-slave polemicists went so far as to place blacks in groups that included orangutans, apes, baboons and monkeys" (p. 141). This belief system was extended to North American Indians. Jaimes (1994) notes that Samuel Morton's research on skull measurements in 1839 of North and South American Natives was widely accepted as a scientific approach to race. She says skull measurements proved that cranial capacity and hence brain size indicated racial intellect and that in Morton's, "widely accepted racial hierarchy, Indians were in competition with Africans/black Americans" for the lowest place in the racial hierarchy of mankind (p. 43).

Fox (2001) explains the differences in terminologies ascribed to race. She says race "is a biological concept now discredited by most anthropologists as a way of categorizing human beings because it is based on superficial, vague, and inaccurate characteristics ('red,' 'yellow,' 'black,' or 'white' skin; 'straight' or 'kinky' hair, etc.)" (p. 20). She further notes over the past 200 years this classification created a hierarchical system that placed darker-skinned people at the bottom culturally, morally, and intellectually. Fox asserts "(t)here is now wide agreement among scientists that there is much more variation within racial groups than across them" (p. 20). She explores how the meaning of ethnicity sometimes is confused with race and says "ethnicity is a combination of cultural affinity, geographic roots, language, religion, sense of shared history, and sometimes, ascribed 'race'" (p. 20). Fox points out "white" is "a category that came into use in late-sixteenth century America to distinguish pale-skinned people, primarily of English origin, from Africans, Indians or 'redskins,' and the so-called yellow races" (p. 22). Furthermore, she notes, over time America changed naturalization laws as non-white groups such as Jews and Italians moved into the middle classes and were then considered "white." The term "white" is sometimes associated with the term "Caucasian." However the term "Caucasian" also refers to those people who are East Indians and are brown-skinned. As late as 1923, America refused citizenship to Asian Indians. This is because while "(it) may be true that the blond Scandinavian and the brown Hindu have a common ancestor in the dim reaches of antiquity . . . the average man knows perfectly well that there are unmistakable and profound differences between them today" (p. 23).

Mills (1998) says Marxists and postmodernists often speak of the "social construction" of race which means that there are no real racial divisions among human beings but "rather a continuous spectrum of varying morphological traits" (p. 47). He says categories that are drawn serve to demarcate one group from another so as to privilege one with economic and political power. He adds the "motivation for using the one-drop rule to determine black racial membership is to maintain the insubordination of the products of 'miscegenation'" (p. 48). Similarly, this applies to those with Indian blood for those who have Native ancestry and are brown-skinned are perceived to be Native by mainstream society. The idea that Indians were viewed as savage and heathen would have encouraged my mother to hide her Ojibway values for she would have viewed them as incompatible with mainstream values surrounding character and ethics. My parents' attitude towards their own racial ancestry would have kept this entire question of racial inequality hidden.

The Use of the Term Race

I use the term "race" with the understanding that it is a social construction. This term "race" is used to show how my being brown-skinned and "looking" different from white-skinned people created much tension for me concerning my physical appearance.

Lived Experiences Around the Tension of Race

Thread #1 - My birth

When I was born in Nicholson it was a home birth. My mother would repeat this story as if to emphasize some point about my entry into the world,

> *When your Granny (Clara) removed the veil from your face, we were surprised on how much you resembled the Hong children - your skin colour and features were just like a Chinese baby. But you had curly black hair. In time your skin colour became less jaundiced. You were born at six o'clock in the morning promising a sunny day. We knew that this was a good omen. A few weeks later I noted the first animal that visited you and it was the snake. The snake promises Wisdom and I knew that you would be clever.*

Every time my mother told me this story, I would beg to know more - what was the snake like, what was wisdom, what animal visited my sister, why was my skin yellow when I was born and where did I get my curly hair from? I wanted to place a significance on my birth that would counteract my sense of unimportance in being born at home without very many people around. True enough, my mother went into labour early and there was no time to get to the hospital but it seemed that this event created a tension about being second best.

Thread # 2 - Early childhood

My parents stayed on in Nicholson until I was four years old. They moved to Sheppard and Morse, a small lumbering village owned by Mr. Sheppard, a millionaire American, and Mr. Morse, his vice-president. My father was promised a job as a stationary engineer trainee and a good future with the company. It was a time of excitement for my parents and it meant a change for my sister and me. It seemed that my stay in that house on the outskirts of the village was, for the most part, secure and happy. I remember the excitement of making sense of print for the first time when I was four years old,

> *Jack and Chrissy, whose parents spoke Ojibway fluently, had just come back from a shopping trip to Chapleau, Ontario, with toys, marbles, and books. My sister and I were interested in playing with their new purchases. Mrs. Q. asked her eldest daughter, Mabel, to read to me when she noticed I was turning the pages of a colouring book over. When Mabel began reading and pointing to the script, it dawned on me that these squiggles had meaning. When I got home with the colouring book under my arm, I pushed the screen door wide open and informed my mom that I knew how to read. I said, "Hey, diddle-diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped over the moon!"*
>
> *She laughed. I was very proud of myself and I knew I pleased her.*

This memory is an important one for me because I learned that I could gain acceptance from people, including my parents. From that point on, I learned that being smart was a ticket to their approval and to the admiration of others. In my early life, the fact that my sister had fair colouring did not bother me, for my mother explained that having a dark skin colour meant that I definitely belonged to the Anishinabe people. The story of animals visiting the new-born reinforced the idea of these Ojibway roots. Thus, I was greatly comforted to know that my brown skin placed me there, and that her understanding of a tradition of animal visitation promised me good prospects for my life. Hence, the social and emotional value placed on brown skin was a positive one in my early life except for one haunting memory.

> *We were still living in Nicholson when hobos would jump off the trains to look for work and food. My mom would often tell my sister and me to ignore the many men who lined the train station or the tracks. One day, my mom, my sister, and I had just crossed the railroad tracks to return from my paternal grandmother's home to our own little house. I turned around to see who was following us for there were footsteps behind us. When I looked back, I saw a poorly dressed man about the same height as my father who gave me a huge smile. My mom jerked me around, and grabbing my hand, she whispered, "Don't look back. He is a black hobo." I turned around again and noticed that he was indeed an ebony colour.*

I remember feeling confused. Her telling me he was black did not confuse me as much as her linking his blackness with not being a nice person, and someone to be suspicious of. Her telling me he was a hobo meant that he was not only poor but also lived on the margins of Nicholson and therefore did not belong to our community and with people who lived in homes. The fact that my mother was brown, kind, and loving confused me too. This varying degree of colour held me in tension for I could not differentiate between the dichotomy of desirable qualities and skin colour. I began to sense that perhaps I could be mistaken for possessing undesirable qualities. This feeling was demonstrated by another story about skin colour that occurred when I was six years old,

> *One day, my mother announced that we were going on a trip to meet my Aunt Violet, her sister who lived on a reserve in Biscotasing. I was about six years old at this time. I had completed Grade 1 and remember being proud of my "cleverness." My mother informed us that Aunt Violet had married a Cree*

> *Treaty Indian and they lived in the bush. She told me that life would be totally different from what we were accustomed to.*
>
> *On the day of our departure, my mother was in a happy mood and I played quickly on that. I demanded to have my hair permed, just like hers. At first she refused but, after much whining on my part, she gave in. When we arrived in Chapleau, my sister and I sat in the beauty parlour with brightly coloured rollers in our hair. It seemed a lengthy wait but my sister and I finally departed, proud of our tight curls. We caught the train and as soon as we arrived in Biscotasing my Aunt Violet hugged and kissed us. It was a joyous time: I became brown as a raisin under the hot sun picking blueberries, canoeing and just whooping it up till darkness.*
>
> *When we returned home to Sheppard and Morse after several weeks, my father was overjoyed and, after a few moments, exclaimed: "Oh, look at little Topsy! You sure got black, Sheila." I looked at my dark skin and his fair skin and it occurred to me that I was black like the hobo of many years ago. I knew where I was located as I studied my sister's lightly tanned skin.*

This memory has stayed with me because I realized that even with all my book learning I could not escape the possibility of possessing undesirable characteristics as long as my colour remained dark. I would say that I was ashamed of myself at that moment and even felt fearful for my continued acceptance. Even though I continued to play outside there were times I felt overwhelmed with jealousy, as I saw my sister and Claudette, both of whom had fair skins, running under the summer sun and not turning dark.

Thread #3 - Later childhood

I was about eight years old when one of the boys from uptown called me a "squaw."

> *My girlfriend, Ellen, and I were walking home chatting away about school and how we were going to spend our playtime. Her parents came over from England after the Second World War and settled into Sheppard and Morse the same time as my parents. Ellen was blond, blue-eyed, and pretty. We held hands as we walked*

> *together for our friendship was exclusive. Some of the uptown boys followed us and, trying to get our attention, began to tease us. We looked back and continued to ignore them. One of the boys, Larry, yelled at me, "Hey, you're a squaw!" I retorted, "No, I'm not!" And then we ran away from their hoots of laughter. I expected my father to be ignited; instead, he told me that ignorance and education weren't necessarily the same thing. I was to ignore such comments and remember to be proud of who I was.*

I remember thinking: Proud of what? My father was fair and so I felt he could not understand what it was like to be mocked for having dark skin. I knew nothing about other brown-skinned people other than my mother, my grandparents, and some of my relatives on both sides of the family. I was not too sure that any of them would stick up for me. I remember feeling powerless. It seemed that my father was oblivious to how I was feeling, and, I believed that he should have gone down and told those boys to watch out. I felt insulted. The tension I was feeling was that since I was a Metis and brown, I could be treated with less respect than my friend Ellen who was white.

Another school situation made me question a teacher's choice for our Christmas play. I was nine years old at the time and, when Mrs. Lewis began delegating parts, I expected to be chosen for the starring role based on my ability to memorize lines. I waited with excitement for I could see myself on stage as Sleeping Beauty and even fantasized what I would wear.

> *Instead I was completely overlooked by Mrs. Lewis. She gave the part to Claudette who had blond curly hair and bright blue eyes. I protested because Claudette was not as good as I was at play-acting. Mrs. Lewis informed me that I would have a minor part as one of thirteen fairies, the Fairy of Wisdom. Looking at the disappointment in my face, she remarked, "Well, Sheila, the Fairy of Wisdom is one who is smart, you know and that is a good role for you." It seemed to me then that the Sleeping Beauty could not be brown-skinned with black hair and eyes.*

This incident made me feel despondent and, although I ended up helping Claudette for she got stage-struck, I never felt much enthusiasm for play-acting after that incident. It appeared that only some roles would be suitable for me. My colour would stand in the way of playing princesses and heroes. Another memoried example of this racial separateness occurred when I was ten years old and playing with the neighbourhood children,

> *We decided to play cowboys and Indians. After watching several clips of the series, "The Lone Ranger" I wanted to be on the winning side. I volunteered, "I'll be a cowboy" to which Billy replied, "Well, you can't. You're a girl and besides you have to be one of the Indians." I protested violently, "Why should I be an Indian?" "Well, you look like one," they chorused. "So!!" I demanded. Then I got into a pushing combat with Bernie and Billy. I finally played the part of a cowgirl for the first time.*

Each new incident compounded the tension I was feeling about skin colour. In order to reduce this tension, I began to seek out ways of making myself feel good by excelling in school. Much of this was short-lived and unsatisfactory because Claudette and my sister were still more popular. It seemed that my intelligence could not offset the undesirability of brownness. This created a tension about my self-worth. I became more and more aware of how my parents were handling racial discrimination. They seemed oblivious to remarks or to being segregated. My father, who looked white, seemed to have more adaptable skills than my mother, who looked brown. She continued to smile and was friendly towards her neighbours. It seemed to me this was her way of keeping the peace. The tension I felt grew out of my confusion about how my parents modelled friendly behaviour, in the midst of racial jokes, and yet attempted to maintain their self-respect and the respect of their neighbours.

Thread #4 - High school

Years later at Chapleau High School I encountered a searing example of racism. It happened as my sister and I, looking over our new timetables, were confronted by the new principal,

> *My sister and I just started Grade 9. We were intimidated by our new school surroundings. Dr. Hagen, who came from southern Ontario and who was hired on the basis of his credentials of being a former professor of mathematics at a German university, was a fearful-looking man, tall, straight-shouldered with a bitter face. He came down a flight of stairs with Mr. Williams and yelled angrily, "Get out of here, you black-faced!" Mr. Williams blushed. I was totally shocked and my sister and I scuttled out. This was the first time in my entire life that I saw how unwelcome an educational institution could be.*

My sister encouraged me not to tell our parents because she feared more trouble at school. I remember feeling powerless and degraded. I really wanted to slap this principal and the fact that Mr. Williams blushed and didn't do anything made me feel even more powerless. This incident was one of many experiences of living in Chapleau for my sister and I were excluded from many of the social events that occurred across town.

As early as four years of age, my perceptions of myself and others were becoming modified to fit in with my parents' and other people's belief systems about the significance and value of skin colour and its location in the world I was growing into. Even the point of my birth raised questions about my importance and my potential ability to contribute to my family's, and eventually to others', lives. Skin colour seemed to be viewed within a context of morality. Blackness meant evilness while white meant purity, something I first realized the day my mother pointed out the black hobo.

Black people were a rarity in Nicholson and Chapleau and there were no blacks living in Sheppard and Morse. This fear of the unknown, like the monstrous races mentioned by Friedman (1981), inspired many of the writings that infiltrated our school system such as the story of *Little Black Sambo*. I still remember the picture of a little black boy with shining white teeth hanging out of the jaws of a snarling tiger. Along these same lines, we were told the story of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and how the black people in the United States were slaves and killed without reason. The tension I was feeling was the disparity between where my parents were locating my skin colour and where I was locating myself. My parents felt that dark skin was a hindrance to worldly success. My tension was how could I be both brown and successful at the same time. How could I still be brown and be treated with the same opportunity, respect, and support that white people would have received? When I first read the story of *The Ugly Duckling* as a child of eight years of age, I believed that one, whether brown or white, could be beautiful. However, as one experience compounded another over time, I slowly realized that other people, who viewed brown skin as an undesirable trait, perceived me as an ugly duckling. The tension I felt was the disparity between what I viewed in the mirror and how others perceived me.

Reflections on the Literature

Spivak (1988) speaks of the subaltern, a person or group of people, who do not belong to the elite power base. Through the colonizer's language, customs, religion, and culture, the subaltern's own identifying artefacts become overwritten and rendered invisible. She says, "(i)f, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow . . . " (p. 28). Spivak also notes that the "Other (becomes) the Self's shadow" meaning that the colonizer's ideology supersedes the colonized's own ideology. It becomes apparent when one sees the colonized speaking the colonizer's language and practicing his customs and religion. It is not so apparent if one were to gaze upon the colonized for he or she still remains brown. Furthermore, this aspect of skin colour keeps him or her from fully participating in the colonizer's world. She notes that once the full impact of the colonizer's own epistemology has been integrated into the consciousness of the colonized, there is no possibility of going back in time to retrieve what was forgotten. This suggests that the Native person who is trying to identify herself or himself as First Nations may attempt to capture what is lost but what is achieved can only be an imitation of what was. Bhabha (1994) also speaks of the subaltern. He says,

> . . . the subaltern instance . . . wreaks its revenge by circulating, *without being seen*. It cuts across boundaries of master and slave; it opens up a space *in-between* . . . the Southern Hemisphere of slavery and the Northern Hemisphere of diaspora and migration, which then becomes uncannily doubled in the phantasmic scenario of the political unconscious. (p. 55)

The colonizer, in his or her displacement of the other's language and culture, renders these markers invisible through time. This displacement creates a void in which the colonized or subaltern fills with new knowledge acquired from his or her colonizer. The ambivalence and phantasmatic scenario occurs when the projected image of the non-white person, the subaltern, which reflects the colonizer's language, customs, and culture, cannot be seen or is invisible to the eyes of the colonizer, since he or she sees only skin colour. This becomes more difficult when the colonized subject looks at himself or herself and hopes to see what the colonizer sees, but the originary roots which have long been dissolved, cannot be seen either. This is the doubling effect that Bhabha speaks of.

Furthermore, Bhabha (1994) describes an intersection, a space, in which cultures, in coming together, are able to negotiate and create a hybridity, an offspring of old and new, diverse and familiar in order to reduce the tension that the colonized, or subaltern, finds within him or her. He conceptualizes:

> an *inter*national culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. . . the 'inter' – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *inbetween* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. (p. 38)

S. Wilson (personal communication, January 30, 2002) notes cultural fusion is like two or three different metals coalescing to form something unique and stronger than if they were separate metals. He says that the quantity from each doesn't matter because it's that quality lacking in the other(s) that strengthens the new *form*. He observes culture is like an iceberg. People are aware of only 10% of what culture is. He says it's the 90% of the unseen mass that "provides the strength and direction" that culture will take. He states, "the fusion would happen under water so to speak. We are not aware of the impact of cultural borrowing unless we are able to carefully analyze the source of the borrowed behavior, thinking, etc." He notes that the "notion of cultural hybridity is likewise that of a new *form* created from two different unrelated cultures resulting in an implied new and stronger *form.*"

Delpit (1995) says it is a very difficult task to try to communicate across individual differences because of the possibility of misinterpretation. This is because differences act as boundaries, rather than intersections to meet and negotiate such differences. She explains "(t)his becomes even more difficult when we attempt to communicate across social differences, gender, race, or class lines, or any situation of unequal power" (p. 135). Even among Native groups this tension cannot be easily resolved because of geographical disparity, gender, and social differences and even timelines that create different historical perspectives.

Anzaldúa (1987), who is half-Chicana and half-white, notes her life had been wrapped in a diaspora, in a metaphor of wandering and a sense of the dispossessed. She describes "a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" at the borderland (p. 3). This borderland presents a mirrored and dichotomous image of two races and two cultures. She says, "I fear no betrayal on my part because, unlike Chicanas and other women of colour who grew up white or who have only recently returned to their native cultural roots, I was totally immersed in mine . . . I am a turtle, wherever I go I carry 'home' on my back" (p. 21). The borderland that Anzaldúa speaks of reminds me of Bhabha's intersection, a place where she had an opportunity to negotiate for herself a comfort zone where she was able to explore her past and present. It appears, at the time of writing, this visit to the Borderlands allowed her to see and justify for herself the reality and significance of her language, beliefs system, and tradition. With regards to my own situation the return to my past allows me to understand the significance of the language, belief system, and tradition I learned as a child and the awareness of how little I knew my Ojibway roots. I knew even less about my French roots.

bell hooks (1990) says "(o)ne change in direction that would be real cool would be the production of a discourse on race that interrogates whiteness . . . race is always an issue of Otherness that is not white; it is black, brown, yellow, red, purple even . . ." (p. 54). This discourse is the place of negotiation where the boundaries between colour evaporate and each colour is given an opportunity of being subject, rather than object. For her this becomes a place of equality. However, what needs to be taken into consideration is while the intersection allows for equality the one important element is that this intersection allows for a negotiation for differences. hooks, who is an African-American feminist, speaks of the impact of marginalization of non-white people and the difficulty in rising within a white elite power structure that would give non-white people a visibility, a name, and a right to own their histories and ideologies in whatever form they have become. She stresses the need to open up opportunities for discourses at the juncture where negotiation of differences is possible with others.

In examining issues of race and putting pieces together in order to come to terms with how race fits in with identity, I am still puzzled by this one issue: how can I convince others that my looking Ojibway does not necessarily guarantee me a place in Ojibway culture and language? How can I be Ojibway and French and still be perceived as an individual worthy of discovery? Spivak (1988), Bhabha (1994), Delpit (1995), Anzaldúa (1987), and hooks (1990) suggest I am located on a periphery because of my race and, in that, there is a tension occurring at this boundary. As I continued to work through the dissertation, Bhabha's focus on the Third Space took a more central role in my thinking.

Tension #2 - Culture

History and Theory of Culture

If the term race is clouded over by an aura of ambiguity and ambivalence, then the term culture is not without its own unique difficulties. Johnston (1996) notes the word "culture" shifted from an early meaning of pastoral care before the sixteenth century to one of aesthetics and class difference in the nineteenth century. She said in the twentieth century Bruner (1990) defined culture as "commitments of particular ways of life with particular communal values . . . and literature and stories of a community that participate in culture formation by affirming certain values and excluding others" (p. 42).

Fox (2001) uses the word ethnicity to mean, "a combination of cultural affinity, geographic roots, language, religion, sense of shared history, and sometimes, ascribed race" (p. 20). The descriptor "ascribed race" suggested that race is integral to culture. My first understanding of culture was that race and culture were the same. It was expected that members of a specific group would behave in a way that reflected their place of origin. The term culture, as I understood it to mean, referred to a compendium of special holidays, cultural celebrations, ethnic foods, dress, customs, and language that describe one's ethnicity. However, Said (1996) states that it "'is in culture that we can seek out the range of meanings and ideas conveyed by the phrases *belonging to* or *in* a place, *being at home in a place*'" (quoted in Krupat, 1996, p. 125). From this, it would appear that culture is dynamic. I began to think about what is meant by the construct of multiculturalism. I wondered what I expected other people to bring to such an event. I suspected that other people expected the same thing from me. In reading Giroux (1993), who points out that multiculturalism is concerned with the issue of whiteness as a mark of racial and gender privilege, I began to view multiculturalism in a different way.

Lived Experiences Around the Tension of Culture

Thread #1: The relationship between race and culture

In my many varied experiences over the years, I found myself in discussions attempting to answer these questions, "Do you speak your language? Did you grow up on a reserve? Do you practice your culture?" and so forth. The perception that I should be Ojibway, both culturally and racially, reminded me of an incident that occurred about seven years ago while I was working for a band-controlled school. At that time, I was left in a wake of confused feelings,

> *It was during our lunch break and several women teachers and I were sitting at the table eating our lunch and sharing stories about our unit planning and how to resolve certain student behaviour. I was sitting quietly listening when our school's white male counsellor walked in and greeted everyone. He looked my way and said abruptly, "Sheila, I am having difficulty talking to some young female Cree students you know, about puberty - could you talk to these girls about women's issues - you know, you being a Native woman." I looked at him shocked and looked helplessly at the other women teachers who were all white and remarked, "Oh, I don't think so." I felt all eyes were on me and I quickly got up and left the staff room.*

I remember feeling angry and mystified as to why he thought I should know how to deal with young Cree women. I was upset at myself for refusing his request. It seemed a simple matter to tell this counsellor that I knew nothing of puberty rites for Cree girls, yet I sat there in the staff room feeling resentful, confused, and stupid. At that moment, I could not unravel the difference between race and culture. I felt a growing sense of powerlessness as a result of being unable to even adequately sort it out for myself. What should I have said? That my Ojibway tradition regarding women was not applicable to Cree women and therefore I should not talk to them? That would have been an untruth for I also knew nothing about Ojibway culture with regards to puberty rites. Then I thought, why should I know my Ojibway culture, just because I am racially Ojibway. I felt confused because it seemed obvious that my racial ancestry should not give me exclusive ownership over its culture.

As I look back from my present day vantage point, I believe that I was bewildered by the intrusion of this male counsellor into my conversation with women and his seeming expectation that I, perceived to be a Native woman, would jump to his demand. The way in which he brought up a sensitive topic such as puberty annoyed me, as if women did not have a right to privacy.

If I did have a link to Ojibway culture, it would have been through my Aunt Violet and Uncle Alex for they lived off the land on a reserve in Biscotasing. One memory is from a time when I was eight years old,

> *My aunt asked my sister and I if we wanted to go blueberry picking. We emphatically chorused, "Yeah" and found ourselves in a golden-tinted canoe. The sky was an intense kind of blue with dots of fluffy creamy clouds hanging like puffballs. I felt in tune to the rippling sound of the paddle as it swept through the water. Too soon, we arrived at the rocky island set with birch trees and undergrowth. We got out and my aunt stepped into the water up to her ankles and anchored the canoe.*

The canoe represented no more than a vehicle of transportation to me at the time as canoes were accessible to both Native and white people. I did not feel, as a child, that the canoe was an extension of Ojibway culture. Yet, over time, the memory caused an uneasiness, for it seemed to represent something more than I could understand as a young child. Looking back, the significance of this event appears to be that the canoe represented my aunt's view of interconnectedness with the earth. By taking us on this trip she hoped that we would share in this same interconnectedness. While it is true that the canoe was an important artefact of Ojibway culture, the more important notion was the interconnectedness I felt towards the land, which is a facet of the Ojibway culture, as I understand it today. The tension that I believe I felt was that I lacked the embedded knowledge that was wrapped up in the artefacts of Ojibway culture. This lack of knowing made me feel inadequate. I believe the greater tension lies in the sense of helplessness over time – the inability to return to the past and be taught by my parents. The tension I felt arose from the confusion between the constructs of race and culture.

Thread #2 - The location of language as an identifier

The second thread weaving through the construct of culture that became a source of tension was the location of language as an identifier of culture. Although my parents sometimes spoke Ojibway in the home, they did not teach my sister or me to speak or understand it. Since all my playmates spoke English, this was not a priority either. My parents believed that speaking two languages would only confuse us and we would become more successful in a language that was spoken around us. I remember this one incident when I was about seven years old,

> *Mrs. Shoup sat at the front of the room and began reading a poem. Its cadence, imagery, and lyrical style enraptured me and I loved it so much that I sang the poem on my way home. It was the called "The Gingham Dog and the Calico Cat."*

I simply fell in love with words for they were able to conjure up pictures in my mind. What these stories and poems did for me was to immerse me in the cultural Eurocentric setting, allowing me to identify with the characters, themes, and customs. Sometimes the stories paralleled my own existence, but more often the stories added a dimension to the life I was living. This engagement with reading brought praise from my parents. My mom often commented, "Sheila is such a clever child." My father would say, "Sheila will be going to university." This praise from my parents for doing well in school encouraged me in many ways to continue with reading and writing. It was on this particular night when I was nine years old I knew I wanted to be a poet,

> *We were on our way home from a potluck supper at the community centre. It was a wintry night with the bright moon shining on the snow making sparkles everywhere. The air was still and very cold. Stars were out dotting the sky and I stretched backwards to see the immensity of it all. I was so glad to speak English - it had such magnificent words to describe feelings and thoughts.*

Since education was important to my parents they insisted that English was important to surviving in life. The English language became a part of who I was and through this language I came to know who I was. I cannot express my memoried experiences of childhood in another language, for it is the uniqueness of the language I knew first that provides for the expression of the range of feelings. English was the language of my childhood and every fibre of my being exuded from, and with, this language. My experience of the kind of violet I saw in twilight could only be described in English, I believe. The tension is my being brown-skinned but owning a language that was perceived as belonging only to English white-skinned people who spoke it first in England. The tension I felt with regards to this was that people expected me to speak Ojibway. The Cree language provided me with such an experience. When I was up North teaching Woodland Cree children, one of the teachers on staff had a collie he named Atim. The word "atim" means "dog." Even today when I say "atim," I conjure up the image of a golden long-haired dog sitting at the doorstep waiting for his master. The tension for me was not knowing how to negotiate language and race in a way that would convince others that it was acceptable to call the language of your childhood as your own.

Thread #3 - Locating myself in Eurocentric celebrations

The cultural celebrations I enjoyed as a child were Christmas concerts and Halloween nights of trick or treating. One experience I recollect was as an eight-year-old taking a part as a country mouse in the play, "The City Mouse and the Country Mouse."

> *I slipped into my one-piece brown costume of the Country Mouse. My mom had spent hours sewing the mouse costume and I felt just grand with my huge, elephant-like ears and thick padded feet. When the audience clapped at the end of the play, I ran backstage and quickly took off my costume. I then ran to where my parents were sitting. My father remarked, "Sheila, you did such a great job! That was a great play!"*

I remember the sense of joy of sitting with my parents and winning their approval. This must have been the highlight for I cannot remember anything else about that night.

Yet this memory is also filled with tension. While I acted well and in a "white" play, and it seemed that the audience loved it, I felt a discrepancy between the role I was playing in real life and the role on stage. I realized that I could keep my identity as a brown person hidden behind a mask. Halloween, too, was always exciting,

> *Johnnie, Bobby, Georgette, Emily, and Maureen met my sister and me at our door. My sister and I were clothed in our Halloween costumes. We weren't allowed to wear anything white because my mom believed that pretending to be a ghost would bring up the dead. So we went out as costumed monsters hiding our faces behind gruesome masks. As we travelled from house to house rapping as hard as we could, surprised faces would greet us at the door and we would yell, "Trick or Treat!" in a chorus. Then the surprised faces would say, "Oh, no not until we guess who you are!" And they would guess and finally someone would say, "You know, I bet that's Sheila - her mother makes such nice costumes. Isss thaaat youuu, Sheila?? Take off your mask." And then once the laughing and guessing was done we would all get our candy and move onto the next house.*

For me, the Christmas concert and Halloween allowed me to don a mask as part of its ritual celebration. I became part of the mainstream. The excitement of acting in front of an audience was superseded by the joy of hiding behind a mask and being a different character for a while. I believed hiding behind masks gave me an opportunity to try out different personas and allowed me to exercise a sense of control of what I believed my Self to consist of. At this time I felt my race as a Native person prevented full union with other children who continued to stereotype me. I wanted to prove that my Ojibwayness as a race was not to be confused with culture. The fact that I was brown should not exclude me from being part of, and belonging within, mainstream society. I think the beginnings of a quandary for my Ojibwayness began to emerge because I could not voice a knowledge of the language and its culture, and yet people's perceptions of who I should be also prevented me from full participation in white mainstream living. What created the tension was the unmasking and facing the dilemma that I belonged not only on the outskirts of cultural events that pertained to white Eurocentric people but that I also belonged on the outskirts of Ojibway cultural events because my parents were unable to teach me and locate me there.

Thread #4: The place of gender within culture

The last story speaks to the tension I experience around the place of gender within culture.

> *I was eight years old and in Grade 5. I absorbed our history text, "Paths and Pathfinders." I marvelled at how these brave explorers from France and England dared to risk their lives by coming to Canada, a wild country inhabited by savages called Indians. The stereotypical portrayal of the Native was one who could not speak English, lived in the woods off the land, were wild, savage, had no laws, and oftentimes raided the homes of the colonists who wanted to make a new life for themselves.*
>
> *Somewhere at this time, I was introduced to the deep and mysterious African exploration of the Englishman David Livingstone. I marvelled at how this brave man risked his life to gain land for England. Imagine what it was like to go into unknown places and conquer strange and unusual people. Henry Stanley who went in search of David Livingstone became a hero to me. The bush around our place soon became a haunt for imagining myself on these strange and exclusive journeys. I would pack my sandwiches slapped only with mayonnaise and some Freshie drink and off I would go into the bush carrying a novel, notepaper, pen, and my picnic lunch. Eventually, I began signing my journal entries as David Stanley.*

The focus on male heroism and exploration in our history text forced a view that European males had power over females, over other races/ethnic groups whom they conquered through their travels, and over their environment. They presented an image of bravery, enterprise, and independence. By excluding the achievements of women, our history textbook rendered them invisible. It was for this reason that I emulated the male image to gain an opportunity to acquire those same attributes. When I looked to my father I saw him in the image of an explorer. He had gained the favour of Mr. Morse who was helping him achieve his engineering papers and so I would watch and admire my father exploring the mysterious, manly subjects of mathematics and physics. In addition, my father was the head of our household: he went to work every day, never did housework, and made rules in our home. Moreover, my mother, who did not contribute financially to the home, appeared subservient to him. My sister and I fought over who would serve him tea and who would untie his boots when he came home from work. Of course, these antics only lasted a short time and eventually my father discouraged them. It was during this time that I began to use the pseudonym of David Stanley.

Woven into this story was the tension around images of race and the dominant narrative of colonialism. When I began to believe that Native people were a savage and untamed race of people, I did not immediately associate myself with that image. I believed the history text was truthful and that Natives were indeed violent. There was a strong sense in the text that Native people were stupid in exchanging fur for beads; they did not communicate well in English; they roamed the land putting up temporary homes; and they did not believe in God. However, all of these images seemed contrary to how I was perceived at home and how I perceived my parents. Because of this, I did not internalize this image until I was called a "squaw" at school. It was then that I realized other people perceived me as "one of those people" in the text. It was quite shocking. The tension was the inability to resolve what other people thought of me and what I thought of myself.

Reflections on the Literature

At one time I believed my situation was unique. The sense that these threads appeared nebulous and infrequent permitted me to ignore them as unrelated incidents and therefore not worthy of scrutiny. However, in my readings on race, culture, and gender I discovered that there are many theorists who have faced the same dilemmas and, in some way, came to a better understanding of how race, culture, and gender were wrapped up within the meaning of culture. In positioning her autobiography, Ang (1994) says her confusion regarding her identity had mobilized her to write about her lived experiences as a "strategy to open up avenues for new speaking trajectories, the articulation of new lines of theorizing" (p. 4). Her mother did not pass on her knowledge of Chinese culture and language to Ang and, therefore, she had to express herself in "bahasa Indonesia" (p. 8). Her first racial slur occurred in Indonesia, a country with which she had strong identifying ties, where she was told to return to China, a country she knew little about. Chineseness was "an imposed identity" (p. 5). Her life was further complicated when her family decided to leave Indonesia because of problems with their Chinese ethnicity. Once in the Netherlands she discovered there was a "'corporeal malediction' of Chineseness that related to the 'yellowness' of complexion and the 'slanted eyes'" (p. 9). She says, "the politics of diaspora serves as a ploy to keep non-white, non-western elements from fully entering, and therefore contaminating, the centre of white, western culture" (p. 15). In addition, she states the Third Space of hybridity allowed her, the diasporic subject, to come to these terms with her own location and that the cultural context of "where you're at" always informs and articulates the meaning of "where you're from" (p. 16).

Tension #3 - Identity and the Narrative Self

History and Theory of Self and Identity

Goodson (1998), Spindler and Spindler (1994), Pinar (1994), and Taylor (1989) give us some insight into ideas about selfhood. Pinar (1994) and Goodson (1998) note self is reflexive, mobile, and crystallized momentarily in time through the self-narrative or autobiography. Pinar (1994) says the "self becomes flesh, in the world. Even when authentic and learned, it is a self we cannot be confident we know, because it is always in motion and in time, defined in part by where it is not, when it is not, what it is not" (p. 220). Likewise, Goodson (1998) says, "*(t)he self becomes a reflexive project, an ongoing narrative project*" (p. 4). He suggests the self is not a stable and fixed entity for with time the self changes and so do the stories created about the self. Hence, since "(t)he self is an ongoing narrative project, we should think more of multiple selves located in time and space" (p. 11).

Spindler and Spindler (1994) speak of an enduring and a situated self existing within each person. They suggest the enduring self "transcends immediate reality, is developed early in life, is a central organizing process in the person, and is, for most healthy persons, romanticized and idealized at a conscious level - though there are unconscious dimensions of great influence (p. 29). The enduring self is that part of a person that connects to his or her past culture and language. Hence the memories of lived experiences in early childhood endure over time and are not easily abandoned. On the other hand, the situated self must deal with everyday living. Spindler and Spindler suggest the situated self "develops as a response to specific situations encountered repetitively by the person. There may be several situated selves, even within the school or classroom context" (p. 29). Thus, the situated self is that part that responds to what is present and attempts to make a connection with tradition and present time.

Taylor (1989) believes that self is defined by others. He says, "One is a self only among other selves. A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it" (p. 35). This suggests that one's self exists to some degree under the gaze of Others and depending on the circumstances there may be an internal or external dialogue. This process creates a moving self in time. He says,

> . . . the issue of our condition can never be exhausted for us by what we *are*, because we are always also changing and *becoming*. It is only slowly that we grow through infancy and childhood to be autonomous agents who have something like our own place relative to the good at all. And even then, that place is constantly challenged by the new events of our lives, as well as constantly under potential revision, as we experience more and mature. (pp. 46-47)

Lived Experiences of a Narrative Self

Thread #1 - The emergence of self in childhood

I believe I was two years of age when I realized that I was separate in the world. When my parents got into an argument one day, my mother told me that she left the following evening on a train to Sudbury to start a new life for herself. My sister and I were left behind in Nicholson with my paternal grandparents. This is the first memory of a feeling of abandonment and a separateness.

> *I woke up to the dim light of the kerosene lamp by the bed. My sister was still fast asleep. I remember feeling lonely and climbed out of bed to look for my mother. The staircase led to the kitchen, which looked bright from the landing. When I finally emerged, I bellowed and my grandmother took me, placed me in a highchair and gave me a bottle of milk to appease my crying. Her voice was loud and disapproving. It would not be for two months that I would see my mother again.*

I still recall the anguish of that separation. The second example of my awareness of being a "self" occurred when I was four years old. I saw my reflection for the first time in a mirror. I was greatly taken aback for I had never seen myself before. It was with such clarity,

> *My mother had just finished braiding my hair and told me to look at myself in the mirror. I got up on a chair and peered into a small oval mirror on the wall in our living room. I grabbed the mirror and tried turning it to see this trick but the back was covered. From that point on, I saw myself everywhere: in the glass of cabinets, in hand looking-glasses, on the surface of lakes and bathtub water and even in the eyes of my sister.*

Seeing myself for the first time caused tension for I had to come to terms with the face that stared back at me. This is not what I expected, although I am not sure what I expected. I knew that I was brown and had black hair, but recognizing myself for the first time was a peculiar sensation.

Thread #2 - The beingness or soulness of the self

The understanding of selfhood within the notion of beingness took a new turn when I was introduced to the ideas of soul,

> *I was five years old when my mother opened up the catechism to teach me my prayers. In it, I learned that every human being possessed a soul and when he or she died that soul went to Heaven. Once a month, the priest from Chapleau would come to minister the Mass to the Catholic people in Sheppard and Morse and my*

> *mother, my sister, and I would find ourselves in the wooden pews but not understanding a word of Latin.*

I suppose my lack of understanding of the formal rites in the Church permitted me to explore other angles in the Christian faith. It was during this time that my parents allowed my sister and me to go to Bible School every Wednesday after school. Here, I learned the Ten Commandments, Bible stories, and salvation. However, when I discovered that animals did not have souls, I looked to the story that my grandfather told me when I was four or five years old and decided that his theology made more sense.

> *One day I was walking around my paternal grandparents' house that rested upon a hill overlooking railroad tracks and a lake. It was a sunny day in July with overhanging clouds and a blue sky. I was feeling a little bored and decided to walk around the bushes. I began entertaining myself with kicking stones around and seeing how far they could arc in the air. Suddenly, my grandfather poked his head out of the screen door and said very quietly but strongly, "Sheila, stop that. There are spirits in those rocks you are kicking. You must remember to leave things on this earth alone."*

This playing around with three different theologies caused much tension for me as I was growing up because I discovered that there were different stories about one's beingness. Did I have a soul? Did animals have souls? Where did my soul come from? Did this soul not make me equal to others? This concept helped me recognize my own individuality, uniqueness, and beingness but it did not solve the problem of skin colour, culture, or language. What was important at age nine was that my soul made me a creation of God and that gave me similar rights to others. The tension that occurred for me was the mirror. What I perceived was not what other people perceived.

Thread #3 - The impact of others upon the developing Self

> *I was sitting with several teachers during an information meeting with a northern school board in Alberta. The chairperson of the school board took the podium and after speaking at great length, paused and remarked, "I see you Native teachers in the audience. You come to teach our children but how can you? You're apples, brown on the outside but white on the inside."*

I felt embarrassed and impotent. Was this remark true? Could I be in a position of deceiving Cree children, by pretending to be Indian when in fact I was really white? I thought that he was foolish and perhaps angry that the Cree children in his community were slowly losing their cultural values and language with the infringement of white mainstream culture; and he himself felt impotent. This incident did not resurface until perhaps five years later when I was teaching a Grade 5/6 class in a northern community school. One of my students had returned from Edmonton with a compendium of writing materials sketched with pictures of unicorns,

> *Janice was sitting drawing a picture of a unicorn. I told her that we needed to go out for recess. She picked up her sketch and said, "Ms. J, I feel just like an unicorn!" I laughed not realizing the significance of this remark for I said, "Me too!"*

It seemed an unimportant moment then, but the image of the unicorn and the apple began to seep through my daily interactions with my students years later. One day, I was reading a section in the novel, *The Last Unicorn* to the class. I began to read the part where the hunter looked back "over his shoulder and called, just as though he could see the unicorn standing in shadow, 'Stay where you are, poor beast. This is no world for you. Stay in your forest.'" The unicorn "stood still at the edge of the forest and said aloud, 'I am the only unicorn there is.' They were the first words she had spoken, even to herself, in more than a hundred years" (Beagle, 1991, p. 4). I began to feel a tension rising in my voice.

I began to reflect upon Janice's comment. I wondered if Janice felt she was like a unicorn because she was neither part of the Cree world nor the world that was infringing upon her northern community. It seemed to me that her Cree world was like the world that the unicorn had emerged from. I wondered if perhaps Janice saw her Cree world as mythical too, and one she could never hope to retrieve. Like the unicorn, she stood at the boundary of either world. I felt that we both were caught within a corridor between these two boundaries of originary cultures and modern culture and unable to negotiate in this space of difference because we could not understand the complexities of this dilemma.

Reflections on the Literature

The idea of relationality or spirituality rather than the idea of one unique soul pervades indigenous epistemology. Angelou (1993), an African-American, tells a cultural story of how a master drummer will seek the spirit of a selected tree to ask for his blessing on the construction of a new drum (p. 33). This is similar to Ojibway's concept of relationality in which the spirit of the Creator pervades all living and non-living things. The sense of beingness is also pertinent in aboriginal epistemology for Delpit (1995) says the "Alaskan Indians hear of a birth and ask, 'Who came?' From the beginning, there is a respect for the newborn as a full person" (p. 100). Hence, the newborn is perceived as a wholeness or beingness in a sense of relationality within an Alaskan community. Taylor (1989) also speaks to the concept of relationality when he says that the self needs to be in relation to what he calls "conversation partners" (p. 36). My conversation partners were my playmates, my family members and teachers. At times, I felt certain "others" did not understand what it was like to be one thing and perceived to be something else. The feelings of inadequacy and puzzles have led me, I believe, to the place of self knowledge that Bateson (1989) speaks of. She says "when one has matured surrounded by implicit disparagement, the undiscovered self is an unexpected resource. Self knowledge is empowering" (p. 5).

Chapter Two

The Narrative Inquiry Landscape

Introduction

In my search for an understanding about the broad concept of identity, I conducted a pilot study in January 2001. The pilot study lasted for only a few months with a set of prearranged interview questions among five participants. Although I thought at the time I was engaged in narrative inquiry I was still thinking quantitatively about research. I began to realize interviewing people with a set of questions was limiting. I discovered that my participants would only answer questions that were outlined to them. They seemed to hesitate in offering more information about their racial and cultural experiences. As a result, the pilot study in a narrative form, was without the rich detail that grew out of the conversations of the main study. Conversation became the most important form of field text in the main study. However, the pilot study did set the stage for further reading and thinking about narrative inquiry

Research Puzzle

When I first began working with First Nations students, I wondered about their cultural location. Elders, I noticed, criticized these students for not knowing their culture. My students, I observed, did not appear to have a fit within the two adjacent "white" communities either. I thought of my students as racially Cree but culturally mainstream. My understanding of "mainstream" was the culture practiced by most people who held shared values of Christianity, spoke English, dressed according to what was in vogue in

North America, believed in a work ethic, and were law-abiding. My students appeared to adhere to what I considered components of mainstream culture. They were fluent in English and dressed in the everyday clothing of most adolescents I had seen in the media and in city classrooms. Some of the parents held positions at the band office or in the community and all the parents appeared to have the latest vehicle. The primary church appeared to be Roman Catholic.

At first, I didn't see a problem with my students not being Cree speakers. I thought they were raised the same as I was. I imagined that some time in the future I would learn my great-grandmother's and grandmother Mary's originary language of Ojibway. I had learned to read and write rudimentary French, German, and Latin in school. As a result, I expected my students would learn Cree once they had an opportunity to do so. However, when the Cree language program emerged on my students' timetables, I noticed a resistance and a sense of struggle for many of my students. I soon discovered they did not speak Cree at home and knew a minimal vocabulary. They did not appear anxious to go to Cree classes; in fact, in some instances, they skipped classes.

I then wondered if they were confused about the significance of learning the Cree language and culture. I wondered if my students were confused about their cultural and racial location, for many of them were fair-haired and fair-complexioned. As I listened to their experiences about going to the "white" communities, it became apparent to me they were unable to find a fit there. I wondered if their struggle paralleled my own struggle of trying to locate myself. I believed when I first began teaching at this band-controlled school that other teachers, students, and the community viewed me as an "apple." For a while I came to view myself as mainstream wrapped up in a First Nations body. I became emotionally immobilized about where I should or could locate myself because I believed I was more than that. I was silenced. I felt my students were shrouded in silence too.

I thought about what I was negotiating with my students as I taught them on a daily basis. I wondered what other teachers were negotiating with their students. I wondered how teachers negotiated a sense of self in the classroom. I thought about the kind of spaces that developed for me when I tried to sort out my tensions around race and culture. My thinking was influenced by Homi Bhabha's (1994) view on cultural hybridity. He imagined a "Third Space" that allowed for the negotiation of cultural differences that formulated a new way of thinking about these differences – a hybridized culture. I wondered if his ideas around the formation of a new culture such as a hybridization of Cree and mainstream or Ojibway and mainstream were possible with these students and myself. My wonderings subsequently led me to formulate the following research questions,

> **What narrative threads do teachers from various ethnocultural backgrounds pull forward to give an account of who they are as teachers?**
>
> **How do teachers negotiate their identities on a postcolonial landscape?**
>
> **What are the educational implications for teachers who work in a band-controlled school?**

In order to come to an understanding in response to these questions, I chose narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). They say, "narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience" (p. 18). This is because "our own lives [are] embedded within a larger narrative of social science inquiry, the people, schools, and educational landscapes we study undergo day-by-day experiences that are contextualized within a longer-term historical narrative" (p. 19).

Rationale for Narrative Inquiry

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) assert narrative inquiry is "a way of understanding experience." It is about "stories lived and told" (p. 20). Engaging in narrative thinking opened the door for me to understand the layered meanings embedded within each of the lived experiences of the participants. Drawing on Dewey's two criteria for experience, that is, the criteria of continuity and interaction, Clandinin and Connelly view experience as temporal and both personal and social. Experience is, in this view, "contextualized within a longer-term historical narrative" (p. 19). In order to understand my own and my participants' situations, it was imperative for me to view each lived experience within its particular historical context. I discovered that thinking in the liminal space between my own lived experience and my participants' lived experiences allowed for a deeper and more personal interaction among us as we engaged in conversations over a period of two years.

The Narrative Inquiry Landscape

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) assert that narrative thinking is part of narrative inquiry. They view narrative thinking as at the boundaries of formal and reductionistic research. They cite five tensions that occur at these boundaries related to certainty, people, temporality, action, and context. The first tension, certainty, is probably one of the most difficult tensions to negotiate at the boundary of reductionistic and narrative inquiry research. Certainty also implies uncertainty. Even in reductionistic research, certainty, its hallmark, is debatable. The reductionist researcher believes he or she is looking at the world objectively. However, all researchers understand new information within an already "formulated set of rules" (p. 36). Narrative inquiry begins with experience rather than with theory or a "formulated set of rules."

Clandinin and Connelly (2000), drawing on Dewey's concept of "experience" say, "[p]eople are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in a social context" (p. 2). The place of people in the inquiry is the second tension. People's lives are central to narrative inquiry. People in narrative inquiry are viewed as "embodiments of lived stories" rather than as representatives or exemplars of "an idea, a theory, a social category" (p. 43). The narrative inquirer participates through his or her own autobiography to help think through the research puzzle.

The third tension is temporality. Temporality is central to narrative inquiry. Time is fluid and one needs to view experience within the fluidity of time.

The fourth tension is action. Action refers to the living moments of this web of relationships of students, teachers, and other partners within the narrative study of experience.

The fifth tension is context. Context, whether it is an historical context, an educational landscape context, or a First Nations school context is always part of narrative inquiry. Context gives experience a perspective. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) see narrative thinking and inquiry as key to representing relationships being experienced in classrooms, schools, and other educational landscapes (p. 18). They say, "Experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is a form of narrative experience" (p. 19). Narrative thinking refers to storied lives within a place, time, and people. My understanding of narrative thinking is that one's life experiences are evoked as flash-bulb memories and often are told as stories within the context of one's life history.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) use Dewey's criteria of experience to set up a three dimensional narrative inquiry space. Narrative inquirers learn, "to move back and forth between the personal and the social, simultaneously thinking about the past, present, and future, and to do so in every-expanding social milieus" (pp. 2-3). They articulate a metaphorical three-dimensional space with temporality along one dimension, the personal-social along another, and place along the third. They point out that there are four directions in any narrative inquiry: "inward" and "outward" as well as "backward" and "forward." The inward direction points to feelings or thoughts while the outward direction points to one's environment. The backward and forward direction refers to the continuum of time as we are always viewing our past and future from our present reference point. Experience is always situated in a multiplicity of places. The participant moves mentally from the confines of the places of conversations to memoried places.

Living on the Landscape

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) talk about being in the midst, "of a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, and being in the midst of a temporal, storied flow" (p. 65). They speak to the purpose of narrative inquiry as a way of "making sense of life lived" (p. 78). Living within the narrative inquiry space allowed me to share in my participants' lived experiences. I listened to and visualized their memories. The participants' memoried places ranged from Papua New Guinea, Scotland, Cape Breton Island, Pakistan, Hong Kong, the Far North, to our band-controlled school. For example, one participant described his originary roots in Saskatchewan but it was his originary experiences in New Guinea that helped him push his boundaries for thinking about the issues of race and culture. In the same way, each of the other participants described the impact of his or her family history as he or she remembered it and brought these memories to the present time. For much of the time, the storytellers themselves travelled back in time inside the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. Schacter (1996) explains, "the beginnings of our life stories are written in our families, and when we try to make sense of these stories near the ends of our lives, it is often to the family that we return" (p. 279). With my encouragement and silences, each participant began to share and to trust their stories without fear of disapproval. As I listened to their stories I became immersed within their space and seemed to live out their memories, even as their stories called up my stories.

Research Site

Our new school sits on land formerly occupied by the band's residential school which saw its last students as late as 1973. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs then hired teachers up to 1991 at which point the band took control over its own education. Many of the students have had great-grandparents, grandparents, and parents who lived in the residential school dormitories. When it was time to demolish the old residential school building, the elders decided to hold a healing ceremony for the community. I recall sitting with many elderly people in a huge circle and hearing bits of conversations. I overheard one elderly woman telling someone how she would look through the windows of her dorm wanting to go back home but couldn't. I looked up at the windows she was pointing at and shuddered at her portrayal of a little child being thrown in a strange culture and language with no access to her family traditions, family history, culture, language, and warmth of her parents, siblings, and relatives. When some of the elderly people passed around old photographs of themselves as children before and after their removal from their families to the residential schools, I was overwhelmed with sadness. One photograph showed a family portrait of two parents and three children. All wore bright smiles, long braids of dark hair, and wore their Cree traditional clothing. The other photograph showed a class of unhappy faces in drab residential-style uniforms of children from six years of age to probably fourteen years of age. All the students had their hair cut short. The contrast was overwhelming for me. I wondered about my own mother.

The band's new school is an elementary/junior/senior high facility with approximately 230 students. Students at our school have band membership and Treaty status. There are also two separate buildings that house the Kindergarten and the Primary/Elementary. There are approximately 120 staff members in all three schools functioning in capacities of administration, teaching, support staff, and maintenance. Most of the support staff are drawn from the community. Our school has state of the art computer facilities, a library rich in First Nations resources, and a Cree language program.

Research Participants

When I chose participants for my pilot study I followed two primary criteria. The first criterion was a willingness to participate. The second criterion was based on background such as gender and ethnicity. Participants needed to be willing to spend personal time with me. They needed to openly discuss experiences around race and culture, aware that the information would be published and stored at a university for other teachers and students to read. They needed to be willing to engage in conversations.

When I was writing my pilot study proposal and ethics review, Dr. Stan Wilson (Personal Communication, 1999), suggested I use tobacco in requesting participation. In Cree culture, tobacco is a sacred symbol used in asking for knowledge from an elder. When an elder accepts the tobacco, he or she accepts your questions and provides a reliable answer. The inquirer cannot ask about spiritual matters pertaining to certain spiritual knowledge. I took tobacco to five potential pilot study participants, William, Beth, Anne (Cree), Peter (Cree), and Jane (aboriginal from B.C.). I began "interviewing" and transcribing the recorded "interviews" from January to April 2001. In June 2001, Anne, Peter, and Jane left for other positions in education elsewhere. I closed my pilot study in June 2001. I realized that Anne, Peter, and Jane would not be part of my main study. William and Beth agreed to continue. I then approached two more teachers, Deanna and Mary, for their participation.

I selected William because he was white, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant reflective of so-called mainstream culture. I only knew William as the Library Assistant. William grew up on the Prairies. He defined his background as WASP. I wanted to understand how self is constructed around the experiences of being male, white, and middle-class. His life experiences in Papua, New Guinea offered insights into the collision of two constructs of whiteness and blackness. William also participated in the pilot study.

Deanna, whose parents originated from Pakistan, came to Canada when she was three years old. I have known Deanna for at least ten years but not on a personal level. She started out as a Grade 5 teacher at the Elementary/Junior/High School but moved to the Primary School after two years in the areas of teaching and later counselling. When she moved back to our school as Vice-Principal two years ago, I asked her if she would be interested in this study. She commented that this study was close to her heart.

Beth, who was born and raised in Alberta, speaks of the prevailing racism in her home community. She married an Inuit man with whom she now has three children. After her marriage she moved to the Arctic to teach Inuit children. Beth has taught Grade 7 in our school for five years. She talked about her difficulties and how she sought to continually resolve the tensions around race in her life. Beth was also in the pilot study.

Mary, whose ancestors came from the Highlands in Scotland, spoke of the marginalization she felt as a member of the MacM. clan in Cape Breton Island. Her previous role was in Careers and Technology Studies and this experience has helped her work on a practical level with her current students. She is currently our I.O.P. (Integrated Occupational Program) Grade 10 teacher.

I like to consider myself as a participant too. I have taught everything from Grade 1 to Grade 12 and still find every teaching moment exciting. I have fulfilled various roles at our school. I am currently in a classroom position and serving as Math Department Head.

Negotiating Relationships, Purposes, and Transitions

When I began my main study, I discovered I was always negotiating time and places to meet. This evolved over time within our relationships. As more and more memories were shared, I became involved in each of the participant's lived experiences. I had to change my own set of preconceived notions of each of the participants. They began to know my own history. We laughed together and were silent together as we both listened to each others' recounting of memories. This changing relationship lasted to the end of the research study.

One of the most difficult tasks I found was holding onto my research focus. The conversations revolved around so many different memories that did not speak to race and culture. When I reflected on our multiple conversations, I was glad I permitted myself this range of conversational topics, for without this range I would never have delved into the topic of ethnicity, for example, which became a crucial part of my understanding of race and culture. I was glad we were flexible.

A second difficult task was negotiating the transition from field texts, such as conversation, to the research texts, the narrative accounts. This involved many returns to the participants as I checked out their meanings. In some cases, the participant changed his or her interpretation of the lived experience, bringing in new memories to support another interpretation. While it may have been overwhelming at times, I appreciated the new look because it revealed a deeper layer and helped me see that my participants were also growing within the narrative inquiry space.

I set up a conference area at the back of my classroom. It was a little room designed for counselling students. Its location allowed me to set up my research uninterrupted and with a degree of privacy. Once the initial set of conversations were finished, my participants and I discovered that we could also meet informally as the need arose. Consequently, our place of meeting later moved at times to my home around my dining room table, to a participant's dining room table, to classrooms, to the library, to e-mails, and to the telephone. William, ~~Deanna~~, Mary, and Beth stayed on for two years evolving over time as their stories were relived, retold, and rewritten. Our relationships as inquirer and participants deepened as we worked through our understandings of race and culture. We learned to respect each other's point of view after much questioning and sharing. We discovered that as stories about the past were shared, transcripts were reviewed as to relevance. Further questioning on relevant information brought the participants and me back to the table, always keeping the focus or purpose in mind. At times, I had to take a step backward and realize I was probing too deeply for there was silence or evasiveness.

For the main study, I saw each participant at least four times. The conversations lasted for at least one half hour each time. Occasionally a conversation lasted one hour and, in Deanna's case, one lasted 90 minutes. Our conversations occurred between March and June 2002. During that period, I met Beth four times, William five times, Mary three times, and Deanna only twice. Afterwards, I met each participant at different times and places in the school, both formally and informally, to discuss certain passages from transcripts for clarification. These discussions created numerous interim texts.

Ethical Considerations

The participants were informed at initial contact in writing of the nature and purpose of the research study. The participants were informed I would use pseudonyms for first names and, where necessary, surnames in order to maintain confidentiality for themselves, for their families and for people they had come in contact with. I informed the participants they were giving me permission to reveal their personal life through our conversations, transcriptions, e-mails, photographs, and personal notes. The participants were made aware of a psychological agency if they were too impacted by memories of events. The four participants from the main study remained to the end, informing me they benefited by the study. They had an opportunity to examine some very deep personal issues, to bring them out for reflection, and to think about their lived experiences around race and culture in different ways.

Composing Field Texts

Autobiographical Writing as a Field Text

I wrote an autobiography as a way of thinking out tensions and puzzles around race and culture. It allowed me to think about further questions I could ask about my participants' life experiences. It also gave me permission to grieve over some of the injustices I felt in my life. It created a space of empathy towards my participants' lived experiences. It put my own lived experiences around race and culture within the context of my participants' lived experiences.

Conversations as Field Text

Conversations provided a vehicle for locating my participants and me on the same landscape. They gladly accepted our space of sharing. I found myself becoming more reflective and asking more questions about their memories. Conversations made up the bulk of my data. I taped each meeting and transcribed the taped conversations onto the Microsoft Word software program for storage and retrieval at a later date. This allowed me to cut and paste. I created a hard copy for my participants which we used for clarification, for more questions, for responses, for sharing, for listening, and in some cases, probing for more details. The questions I initially used in my pilot study were valuable because they helped me focus and fill in awkward spaces in conversations. I framed my questions around four headings: autobiographical sketch, early home experiences, early school experiences, and beliefs around identity. The first set of questions was titled, "General Information,"

1. *Provide an autobiographical sketch starting with the year of your birth, birthplace, and your family tree up to great grandparents and including the schools you attended.*

My purpose was to get the participants talking. It was general enough and it provided me with some information about their ancestry. It became a door opener for me as participants opened up at this point. I did not know any of my participants personally and I felt awkward asking personal questions about their lives, even though they agreed to participate in this research. I felt especially awkward with William who was male. How could I establish a warm safe feeling without crossing boundaries? Each of the participants spoke at length about whatever popped to their minds about their childhood and it suddenly occurred to me that the relationships Jean Clandinin (Personal Communication, 2002) talked about were happening right there and then. It was an exciting moment.

The next time I met each participant we spoke of "Early Home Experiences," except for Deanna who conversed on these questions in our first meeting. The questions are as follows,

1. *What are the earliest memories that you can recall?*
2. *Describe some of your happiest memories of your family relations.*
3. *What is your earliest recollection of an event or experience in school that impacted you?*
4. *Did you ever experience an awareness of a self that was separate from others either in the home or at school?*
5. *What are some memories of cultural events celebrated in the home that were different from those celebrated at school?*

I hoped each participant would provide me with a context in which I could interpret their experiences such as the places where they grew up and the various relationships they had with their parents and grandparents. The questions around their early home experiences probed further into their early life. Each participant was encouraged to delve into his/her childhood and illustrate some of the tensions he or she experienced around identity with special emphasis on race and culture. I encouraged the participants to delve into happy memories as well as memories that caused them tension. The stories of early home experiences were eventually expanded to include early school experiences and the tensions that may have evolved from interactions at school and community. The headings of "Early School Experiences" were as follows,

1. *What is your first memory of school?*
2. *What is your first memory of reading print for the first time?*
3. *Was the language spoken at school different from home and how did that impact you?*
4. *Describe memories that impacted you in school.*
5. *What impact did school celebrations or cultural events have on you?*
6. *Describe other school events that you consider important?*

Next, I asked directly for their opinions and beliefs about identity and, more specifically, their beliefs about their cultural and racial identity. The questions I asked were as follows,

1. *What are your cultural and personal views in regards to identity?*
2. *What impact did your educational experiences have upon you as an adult and as a teacher?*

I wondered how their experiences impacted their lives as educators and their relationship with students. I examined my own life thinking about some of the difficulties I had in growing up and attempting to resolve some of the issues I had with race and culture.

Each conversation was dated, recorded, and transcribed to my home computer. Each tape ranged from 30 to 90 minutes of conversation. The printed transcripts were brought to the participant to review for correct spelling of place names or words.

E-mail/Photographs and A Map as Field Texts

E-mails were used to clarify questions and the responses became another kind of field text. William and Mary brought in old photographs and related a bit of history about their grandparents, parents, and relatives. This permitted a closer look at their lived experiences. Deanna brought in a genealogical map to help me see where she began to locate herself culturally.

Composing Research Texts

Analysis and Interpretations

What I discovered in this research was that there were many interpretations of a memory. For example, when I was sent out of Chapleau High School, I clearly remember my humiliation but could only remember the outline of the experience. I don't remember the actual day, the other teachers or students at the time, whether we went home or if the matter was taken to the school board. Ellis (1998) explains that our individualized perspective is limited by "our horizons – our prejudices – (which) continually change because of our contact with the horizons of others" (p. 8). Remembering this high school incident made me realize that my lived experience had a place within a larger social and educational context.

Polkinghorne (1995) defines the term narrative as "a discourse form in which events and happenings are configured into a temporal unity by means of a plot" (p. 8). He describes each narrative as possessing a plot with a beginning and an end that creates a "narrative gestalt" (p. 8). The narrative gestalt is the gleaning of threads woven into each lived experience. Polkinghorne states that "the significance and contribution of particular happenings and actions are not finally evident until the denouement of the episode. Events which might have appeared insignificant at the time may turn out to have been a crucial occurrence affecting the outcome" (p. 8). This idea has helped my understanding of the lived experiences of each of the participants who described pivotal moments in their lives and how these moments led them to a more compassionate understanding of marginalized people. Eventually that path took them to our meeting place within the doors of this band-controlled school. Moreover, Polkinghorne says, "when composed into a story, a new level of relational significance appears. The relational significance is a display of the meaning-producing operation of the plot" (p. 7). Furthermore, he says, "storied memories retain the complexity of the situation in which an action was undertaken and the emotional and motivational meaning connected with it" (p. 11). This helps me understand why my memories of imposed marginalization remain cuttingly clear - the feelings of shame and hurt still fresh even after decades.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) see, "people, places, and things as *becoming* rather than *being*" (p. 145). I created many interim texts organized around headings before reaching the final product, the narratives of my four participants. The significant headings were tensions around race, culture, and narrative self. I thought I could simply pull excerpts out of the conversations and write it up. It never happened. This was the most difficult part for I had to go back several times with various writings, changes, and transformations as new memories surfaced. I included readings and interpretations and still changes were taking place until I arrived at a narrative text that spoke as closely as possible to how my participants and myself saw it as it related to our issues around race and culture.

Voice

Voice belonged to both the participant and myself. I found this very difficult to do as I found myself speaking for my participant. I remembered one participant laughingly commented, "I never felt like that!" I brought back many interim texts to ensure that their voices were being heard. I made changes based on what they said in order to respect their voices.

Signature

I sorted out the narrative threads and rewrote lived experiences by combining chunks. Each narrative had my participants' stamps of approval because the excerpts came right out of the conversations. This was evident in writing the excerpts in italicized, single-spaced, Times font, 12 point. My interpretations however became evident when I wrote in the regular Times font, 12 point. I interpreted each lived experience within the context of a theoretical understanding. Participants said, "So that's what it means!" or "I read that writer in my university days."

I completed each narrative individually. Each narrative chapter was oriented towards the stories about racial and cultural beginnings, racial and cultural tensions, and their impact upon the narrative and teaching self. The pertinent parts of the transcribed conversations were copied and reviewed for significant points. Stories that centred around spouses and relatives, personal information that participants wanted deleted, stories that revolved around issues other than race and culture, opinions about teaching, and additional stories that did not contribute to new information about the issues were deleted at this point. This created, for each participant, about 25 pages of a rough draft. Relevant quotes were cut and copied and edited for grammar and spelling errors. The narrative was written for the participant who reviewed it for content. They agreed unanimously for its inclusion in the dissertation.

Looking Ahead

In each of the forthcoming narratives, theoretical considerations were woven as a way of understanding the lived experiences. Theories about postcolonialism, race, culture, and narrative self were invited into the narrative inquiry space to illuminate our experiences around race and culture. In Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 I write the narratives for my four participants. In Chapter 7 I address the research questions and discuss what I believe to be the educational implications as a result of my research.

Chapter Three

Exploring Deanna's Postcolonial Landscape

Narrative Beginnings

Introduction

In this section, I explain Deanna's family origins in Pakistan as the way she locates herself culturally. In her conversations with her Aunt Em, Deanna discovers diaspora running through her family history. The first diaspora occurred from a split within the family tree in the early 1800s. The subsequent diasporas centred around her grandfather's move to Hong Kong in the early 1900s, and her own move to Canada in 1967. Deanna said she and her family experienced many diverse experiences as a result of living in these varying geographical locations. Deanna commented that she began to understand how generational diaspora caused her to experience tension around race and culture while growing up.

Beginnings

Her birth certificate

When we began our first conversation, I asked Deanna about her family history. She said she was not too familiar with her roots in Pakistan. She then embarked on a personal quest to find out more about her family history. During one of our regular meetings, Deanna brought over a huge map of her family tree that her parents had requested from a relative living in Pakistan in order to provide her with more information for this research study. She also contacted her Aunt Em, the older sister of her father by twenty years, now in her eighties, who currently lives in Edmonton.

Deanna explained that the map illustrated her family beginnings. She noted that when she was examining the map with her father she realized no female names were recorded. He commented that lineage lines were based on male members only. She expressed surprise and hurt by this omission and complained to her father that it made her feel invisible. She commented that shortly afterwards her father produced the family's birth certificates. She explained,

> *The interesting thing I noticed - oh, my gosh - he hands me this paper and I'm thinking - this was like a paper to my identity. If I didn't have this paper who knows what race I'm from or what I am. What I mean, it was kind of interesting the minute he handed that paper to me. I'm thinking, "Oh, now I'm somebody now." It was legitimate. Yeah, I belong somewhere. Mind you, I can't read a word because it's all in Urdu (with a laugh).*

This family map has become, as we worked together, an integral part of Deanna's understanding of her ethnic and cultural roots. Deanna said that this sketch of her family tree placed her within Pakistani culture and history. She had a sense of belonging. To resolve her tensions in not knowing her family history Deanna said on many occasions she sought the help of her Aunt Em who gladly provided her with many warm and lively stories about her ancestors and the early life of her paternal grandfather living in Hong Kong. These stories about her ancestors' split from a powerful ruling family, her grandfather's life in Hong Kong, and her father's move to Canada created a space for her own contemplation about the tensions surrounding the issues of race, gender, and culture.

The British in India

Deanna's investigation into her origins aroused my own interest in learning more about the history of India. This interest brought me to several historical texts of South Asia. I discovered Deanna was indeed part of a diverse background enriched by a flow of languages, cultures, and histories that came with each successive invasion of India over the course of many centuries. According to Belasco and Hammond (1967) "the earliest inhabitants of the Indus River Valley were small, dark-skinned Dravidians" followed by the "Aryans from central Asia about 2500 B.C. These Caucasian people were tall and light-skinned" (p. 11). There had been a remarkable number of invasions after the Aryan invasion. The Persians were followed by the Greeks under Alexander the Great and, over time, succeeded by the Scythians, the Kushans, and the Huns. The Turks, who swept across India, succeeded the Muslims from Saudi Arabia. The Mongols arrived and remained in power for several hundred years. The British usurped the Mongols economically and politically in the eighteenth century.

Amin, Willetts, and Hancock (1982) stated, "by the mid-nineteenth century, (the British) were the new emperors of all India" (p. 29). In 1857, Muslims spearheaded a mutiny called the Sepoy Mutiny but were crushed. This led to their marginalization by the British. Hindus were favoured for the civil service and the Sikhs for military service. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, a Muslim friendly with the British, theorized there should be two nations instead of one for there could be no middle ground for those of the Muslim faith and those of the Hindu faith. Over the course of time, Mohammad Ali Jinnah and the poet Dr. Muhammad Iqbal initiated a series of political developments that saw a partition being formed within the country. With the agreement of the British government, the birth of the new nations, East Pakistan and West Pakistan, one Muslim nation, took place in 1947 (pp. 29-34). This fragment of history illuminated for me how Pakistan came into being, how Deanna was born a Muslim, and how the British, in destroying her family line, caused her ancestors, her grandfather, her father, and herself to become part of the Asian diaspora.

The Rajputs

According to her Aunt Em, Deanna's family was a direct descendant of a powerful ruling family, the Rajputs, who were Sikhs. The Rajput male family members became a threat to the British control of India in the early 1800s and a decree was sent out to kill its male members. Both of these brothers, Deanna's ancestors, managed to escape the slaughter by fleeing into the jungles and finding safety within villages, only to lose each other. In time they formed separate lines of descendants.

According to Aunt Em, these brothers basically had to assimilate the customs and dress of the village people who accepted them. In this way they were able to avoid detection. It was at this time that her ancestor converted to Islam in order to ensure his and his descendants' survival. He dropped the hyphenated surname because that would signify his roots. However, the ancestor kept the family history alive through retellings of this historical moment and by encouraging marital unions only with those of the Rajputs caste to ensure that the class structure remained intact. According to Wilber (1964) "civil servants, politicians, lawyers . . . have much in common. All can speak English and are familiar with English law, history and customs; most have been educated in England . . .

Most live well, travel widely, and have several servants" (p. 6). Deanna's grandfather's life story fits within Wilber's category.

Her grandfather

Deanna's Aunt Em remembered a plague in Pakistan in the late 1800s that left her grandfather an orphan. His relatives were too poor to send him to school. One day, an older cousin, home on a visit, found him under a tree waiting for the schoolchildren to come by to teach him what they had learned. This cousin, who was in his thirties, was employed by the British army in Hong Kong and had a comfortable lifestyle there. He felt sorry for his young cousin and brought him to Hong Kong to live with him.

Life turned around for her grandfather. His desire to learn won him scholarships and a chance to study at London University in England where he was granted a degree in chartered accounting. Her grandfather became a linguist, speaking French, English, Latin, and Mandarin. He eventually was employed by the Banque de l'Indochine in Hong Kong and began an import/export business that became very successful. He married a step cousin who also was Muslim and who belonged to the Rajput caste.

Deanna's Aunt Em said they became very wealthy in Hong Kong and lived the "high life." They had four servants – a nanny, a housekeeper, a cook, and someone to do the laundry. Their servants spoke Mandarin. Her grandfather would bring the latest attire from France and her Aunt Em remembered one incident in which she wore a designer swimsuit to the beach that caused an outrage among Muslims. Her own relatives labelled her as a bad girl. Deanna remembered this story paralleled her own when she went to a Pakistani-Canadian conference as a university student.

When the Second World War broke out, her grandfather transferred money to banks in France and Algiers. They left Hong Kong for Pakistan in 1946 but retained the family home in Hong Kong for future use. Her grandmother took gold jewellery with her. Her father, who was six years old at the time, was raised in Pakistan. Her dad's older brothers, however, returned to Hong Kong to finish university where they achieved degrees in medicine. One became a neurosurgeon and the other a general practitioner. Her Aunt Em had won a scholarship to Northqute teacher training school in Hong Kong but this was short-lived for her father pushed her into medicine. She did her nursing and mid-wifery at the General Nursing British Army Hospital and her postgraduate studies at Chelsea Hospital for Gynaecology in London, England. She returned to Hong Kong for a while only to find that her family members did not want her to work. When she came across an advertisement for nurses in Canada she applied. She wanted an adventure and believed she would find it in Canada because she would find "wild Indians with bows and arrows."

When she arrived in Canada her position was at a hospital in Swift Current. She recalled it was such a disappointment. Her Aunt Em told her she liked working in the hospital but the problem was "everything outside work." Aunt Em married a Canadian whom she met at the hospital where she worked. He was a farmer of Jewish-German descent. Their marriage caused a stir in Swift Current. According to Aunt Em she made the newspapers frequently because the people did not know of any other Pakistani people and therefore any social event involving a Pakistani woman was considered newsworthy. Deanna commented that the many newspaper clippings and photos of her Aunt Em impressed her. In 1966, Deanna's dad had written to Aunt Em about Canada and, despite her own difficulties, she encouraged him to come over to see for himself.

Deanna's parents

Deanna's mother was Muslim and spoke Urdu. Her mother's father was a lawyer and a minister in government. They all lived in India until the partition in India forced them to move to the same area where her father's family lived and they became neighbours. Hence, her mother grew up knowing her father. They eventually fell in love with family approval. Her father started pre-med and began to raise a family in Lahore in the Punjab province of Pakistan. Deanna's dad decided to visit Aunt Em in Canada to find out what the country was like.

Deanna's father stayed one year in Canada and decided that it was a place in which he wanted to raise his children. In 1967, he sent for his wife and children. However, in order to support his young family he had to find employment right away. It was at this point that her father gave up medical school to find a job in the trades. The job of a car mechanic came up and he latched onto it. Deanna was three years old at this time.

Bateson (1989) says, "each of us constructs a life that is her own central metaphor for thinking about the world" (p. 241). In the same way, Deanna sought her Aunt Em's help in her family history. She said knowing something about her family history gave her a sense of belonging to her roots. Ricoeur (1992) states, "Dilthey's formulation of the concept of the interconnectedness of life is like the concept of a life history" (p. 141). This family history and stories about her grandfather connected Deanna to her past. This link to her past, she said, gave her a sense of empowerment for now she had some knowledge of her grandparents and ancestors. She said she and her parents were equally excited about her research into her Pakistani roots. When she received her birth certificate, for the first time she said she felt positive because there was proof of her existence as a Pakistani person with a shared history.

Present Day Deanna

Deanna started school in 1969 completing Kindergarten and Grade One in Swift Current before moving to Edmonton in 1972. She believed her parents' move was to allow them to continue their friendship with a Hindu couple. Deanna completed her public school education starting with Grade 2 in Edmonton and finishing with a degree in psychology and education from the University of Alberta in her early twenties. She said her school life was not always pleasant, as she had to face racial and cultural conflicts with her East Indian friends and non-Indian schoolmates. Her own parents tried to juggle both Western values and Pakistani values and so she found herself straddling both the Pakistani culture and the Canadian culture, oftentimes ending in conflict with her parents over dress, customs, and religious practices.

She completed her teaching practicum in city schools. When our school offered her a teaching position twelve years ago she accepted it. She found a fit in this school –

she is now serving as vice-principal but she is not far from the children. Not too long ago, she said to me that she remembers one of my students and, with sparkling eyes and a voice filled with enthusiasm, she says, “I had him in Grade 3 and he would talk so much. He had so many stories to share about his grandmother.”

While going through her transcripts, I became astonished that I knew Deanna only slightly through the years. To me at that time she was an attractive-looking and lively young woman with long, thick, brown hair, fair-skin, and big brown eyes. She started teaching a year before I did and taught a Grade 4 class. What I noticed at that time was the care she took in teaching her students. Visiting her classroom was always exciting for me because I got a chance to see her students’ work displayed on interesting bulletin boards. There were so many indications that Deanna worked hard at helping her students learn then. Today, as vice-principal she continues to work long hours and to do her best for those who come in contact with her. She said she has now reached a stage in her life where she would like to sort out some of her own tensions around racial and cultural issues.

Tension #1- Race

Introduction

In this section, I recount Deanna’s memories of her early experiences in trying to cope with racial tensions. She remembered several adolescent experiences that created anxiety around her racial origin. The first memory, she said, was of being lumped with other peoples of Indian origin and feeling confused about other people’s perceptions of her as a non-white. She had to try to understand for herself that, while her parents taught her that she was an Aryan at home, the Canadian "white" community did not consider her an Aryan. Secondly, she said, she began to realize that her ability to pass as Lebanese in junior high was translated into mistaken racial and ethnic origins. Next, she had to deal with her non-white friends who resented her fairer complexion because they thought she had a better fit in the Canadian "white" community. Deanna stated she joined the Pakistani-Canadian Youth Association as a way of finding other Pakistani youth who had similar difficulties. Deanna discovered many of the youths, who were about the same age as she was, were in conflict with their traditional values. She remembered one conference in particular. Her peers followed Muslim ways during the day in front of their parents but in the evening they donned Western clothing and partied. She said she felt like an outsider because she didn't party. Years later, as a teacher, she faced more conflict around multicultural celebrations.

Lived Experiences Around the Tension of Race

Thread #1: Deanna's conflict with East Indian categorization

Deanna recalled it was probably around Grade 5 or Grade 6 that she really started feeling different when other kids located her as East Indian and not Pakistani. She and her sister were the only Pakistani students at this school. Furthermore, Deanna also felt she was becoming more culturally Canadian. She remembered this incident:

> *At that time there was a big influx of immigrants coming in from South Asia and the whole thing about "Paki." Of course what happened was with this East Indian boy being Sikh and being in my classroom, other students called us*

> *boyfriend and girlfriend. That really started bothering me. I brought these friends over and they said, "You know Deanna got a boyfriend and his name is So-and So and he's Sikh." My mom said, "So what is wrong with that?"*

She remembered the relief she felt. Her mother handled it well by brushing it aside. The tension she said she felt was the way in which her friends categorized her. She was lumped with all other East Indian students who went to her school. She said she felt her individuality was at risk. Moreover, she said she felt more Canadian than Pakistani at this point. She was feeling confused and upset. Her parents had superimposed the English language and Canadian culture onto the Urdu language and Pakistani culture. She did not want to be categorized with the Sikh boy because she did not consider herself Sikh. She also resented others' perceptions that her potential future mates would be restricted to just one group of males, those of East Indian heritage.

Thread #2: Deanna's portrayal of herself as Lebanese

Deanna remembered being bullied a lot in junior high. She became a very quiet child with low self-esteem. It was a really difficult time for her. Deanna noted, upon reflection, that many of her friends were of African or Asian descent mainly because they were sympathetic and supportive towards her. Her parents encouraged her to be broad-minded and that friendships could be developed with different peoples no matter what their religion or makeup was. They modelled this by being friends with a Hindu couple. However, as she got older, she began to see that Pakistani people were not often seen in the best light. This caused her to deny her roots. She remembered hearing comments about Pakistani people:

> *It was in junior high that I did deny my identity. I said I was Lebanese. I did not say I was Pakistani. And because I was fair I could to do that. Until, of course, when my sister started school and it screwed that up for me because she had darker skin. I was ashamed of being Pakistani. "Oh, you guys smell and you guys wear different clothes with greasy hair." And even though I knew my family was not like that I was buying into that stereotype. Even thinking that being white is better.*

She said that this was a difficult time for her because she wanted to be accepted by her teachers and her peers. At this time, she noticed Lebanese people had already been through the transition period. She noticed they seemed to be more accepted by the "white" community. When teachers asked about her ethnic origins she said she was Lebanese. She discovered she could pass for one. It made living in junior high a lot easier.

She mentioned this feeling surfaced one day at our school last year when a counsellor made a comment on East Indians. She turned to look at him and told him her family came from Pakistan. He had thought she was Italian or Spanish. Deanna said she feels powerless and insignificant when staff members categorize her. She wished they would perceive her as a unique individual and take the time to find out about her background.

Thread #3: Deanna's conflict with being categorized "white"

Deanna thought she would have full acceptance by the East Indian community. In high school her girlfriends often brought up the topic of whiteness and how her fair skin gave her more opportunities for fitting into mainstream Canada and for finding a husband. The tension she faced was trying to please her friends by overlooking their comments and yet trying to maintain her integrity. Finally one day she couldn't keep quiet and she told them how she felt about their racism towards her. She says,

> *"So what I'm supposed to do? Apologize for that? I'm supposed to suffer because I'm white?" I asked. They said, "Well you're white - you never had to go through stuff like we had to." I replied, "I'm going through stuff with you guys. You guys are judging me because I'm fair." So they had this built in hostility towards people who were lighter skin and this whole northern-southern Indian thing. I was often told, "You guys are mixed - you're Aryan - you're not the pure Indians."*

She experienced further marginalization when she went back to Pakistan as an 18-year-old. She believed this was an opportunity for beginning to connect with her roots. When she visited her relatives she openly discussed her experiences in Canada.

> *And in fact I didn't realize this whole Muslim-Hindu thing, I didn't realize until I got back to Pakistan and staying there with my cousin and it came out that we had friends who were Hindu. "You have friends who are Hindu?!!" He got up and walked away. He couldn't believe we had friends who were Hindu. We were really shocked. That stems back from the history of the Hindu and the Muslims and the brainwashing.*

She was totally astonished at the feelings that the Muslims have towards the Hindus in her native Pakistan. There seemed no reconciliation for her. The space she found herself in was confusing and bewildering.

Thread #4: Deanna's conflict with the Pakistani-Canadian Youth Association

When Deanna started university she was very confused about her racial origins. She said she realized she did not fit in Pakistan anymore. At the same time while she believed she was Canadian, she always felt challenged when people would ask, "Where do you come from?" She remarked in one of our conversations that she felt like she was not "anywhere" at this point in her life. She decided to join the Pakistani-Canadian Youth Association in order to gain some insight into her tensions by being around other Pakistani youth. She thought that perhaps if she found other Muslims she would find a "home" for herself. She says this turned out not to be the case,

> *It was a really eye-opening experience for me. I thought I had the power to change stuff here. I could make it better. The one thing I noticed was at this Pakistani-Canadian Youth Association conference was being Muslim you're very conservative. I went there not being conservative because Mom and Dad kinda taught us you are what you are. Don't hide, and, so, of course, I went there wearing a dress. I had my hair cut short. There were some girls there who had their heads covered and what not. I thought I have nothing to be ashamed of but I had dirty looks from the adults in the community.*

She discovered many of the Muslim youths had similar problems to those she experienced. She found out that while these young people publicly made religious observances, they went in the evening to drink at bars. She felt they had a sense of being lost. She said she was glad for her upbringing because she felt grounded in being Canadian.

Thread #5: Deanna's conflict with a multicultural day

I believe Deanna was questioning what it means to be "authentic." What does it mean to be Pakistani in Canada? She remembered feeling marginalized by teachers at a Multicultural Day being celebrated at our neighbouring Primary School three years ago,

> *I am wearing this traditional outfit and stuff and some girl in Grade 5 said, "Oh, nice dress," and I said, "Oh thanks." I thought, "Wait a second. Maybe they think that is how I dress." I think I shocked the teachers more. I think the students are used to seeing people with different regalia and stuff from powwow dancing but the teachers didn't know what I was.*

This incident put her in a troubled frame of mind. She wondered why only those teachers who were from other countries had to dress up and be displayed. She wondered if others saw her as Pakistani and not Canadian. Giroux (1993) says that "multiculturalism is not only about the discourse of alleged others but is also fundamentally about the issue of whiteness as a mark of racial and gender privilege" (p. 60). Deanna commented she felt that she had to parade the exotic nature of her culture. She felt marginalized and different noting white teachers did not have to do the same thing.

Deanna had to struggle with a deep sense of being, what she called, put into a "box." Her diaspora created much of that situation for, as she said, many Canadian people whom she came into contact with over the years, did not know too many Pakistanis. Although she knew she was an immigrant as a three-year-old, she did not think of herself as an immigrant after living in Canada for most of her life. The categorization or "box" that she was put in was East Indian and this umbrella did not make her feel any more comfortable. Thirdly, her parents gave her a sense of being Aryan, which she found hard to live up to next to blond and blue-eyed individuals.

Deanna said she felt she was always defending herself against categorization. This, she said, filled her with anxiety about her own sense of self. The categorization is similar to the labelling Khayatt (1994) describes when she was a student at a university in Canada. According to Khayatt, labelling locates oneself in easily explainable and dismissive terms. For example, she describes a situation in which she was labelled as an immigrant by virtue of her skin colour while her white professor who was a British immigrant was passed over. It is the superficiality of labelling that Khayatt found hurtful. Khayatt concluded, "I do not want to be heard through a label imposed on me . . . I do not want to be erased as a consequence of an assumed identity" (pp. 88-89).

Chambers (1994) summarizes this feeling of abandonment and this sense of confusion about identity. He says, "Cut off from the homelands of tradition, experiencing a constantly challenged identity, the stranger is perpetually required to make herself at home in an interminable discussion between a scattered historical inheritance and a heterogeneous present" (p. 6). Deanna asserted she felt she could not return to Pakistan to get a real sense of being Pakistani. Nor could she be accepted as Aryan in Canada.

Tension #2 - Culture

Introduction

In this section, I give an account of Deanna's growing sense of becoming mainstream Canadian. As soon as she arrived, her Aunt Em insisted Deanna and her sister not speak Urdu at home in order to make living in Canada easier. Once Deanna started Kindergarten, Deanna became immersed in what she termed the "Western culture" taking on the artefacts that would locate her as a Canadian. She learned to speak English fluently and forgot her native tongue of Urdu. She dropped the East Indian and Muslim style of dress in favour of blue jeans and short dresses in elementary school. She began the process of identifying with white Eurocentric characters in books she read in school and at home because there was not too much East Indian literature available at that time in junior high school. Lastly, she walked between the religious world of the Mosque and its teachings and the cultural and religious realm of Christianity.

> *So we came in 1967. I don't really have memories of that. I started Kindergarten in 1969. Now what happened was my sister during that year went back to Pakistan with my dad to visit my grandfather who was very ill at that time. So they left and I remember staying with my mom and my uncle and his parents. So umm again not too many memories.*

I asked Deanna in a later conversation if she felt saddened by this event and she said no. I wondered even if at age five she would have wanted to go back to her home. She maintained that was not the case. She believed this memory of being left behind stands out because her father had left for an extended length of time. I wondered why she included this memory as part of our conversation. For an outsider looking in, it seemed to me this was the pivotal moment for Deanna, for it was this point in time that she could demarcate life in Pakistan and life in Canada. It appeared to me that it was in Kindergarten that she began establishing her new roots in Canada.

Thread #1: Deanna loses her first language

Deanna stated she spoke Urdu in Pakistan but once in Canada, English immersion started for her. Her Aunt Em insisted Deanna's mother speak English at home.

> *Now the interesting thing that I wanted to share with you, in terms of language, my parents spoke Urdu. That was our first language at home. When my sister and I came to Canada we were fluent Urdu speakers. When we came here, my aunt told my mom, "Don't have the girls speak Urdu because they are not going to be able to do well in school and they're not going to learn English so you have to speak to them in English." My parents both spoke English too. So my mom was a young mother like she was probably twenty-two. She never left home and lived in another country before. She left her whole family behind and came here. So my aunt being the one who has travelled around the world and more educated.*

> *My mother decided "Okay." Now, to this day, I tell my mom, "How come you never pushed us?" My mom goes, "Well, you know, Auntie said it wasn't a good idea because you girls wouldn't do well in school." Because of that now to this day I really regretted it.*

Deanna remembered a trip to Pakistan when she was in Grade 3. She recalled only the shock of seeing the poverty of the people living there. She remembered realizing how lucky she was to live in Canada. The second trip to Pakistan, when she was eighteen years old, affected her more deeply. The tension she felt was not being able to communicate effectively with her aged grandmother. She said this inability caused her much tension. She became resentful towards her parents for not encouraging her to retain the Urdu language. She relates,

> *My sister and I went on a trip alone to Pakistan and communicated with my grandmother. That was the first time I regretted not learning my language because I couldn't sit and communicate with my grandmother. We always had to have an interpreter around which really wrecks the bonding experience. My grandmother understood English but we still felt we couldn't communicate totally - like what we really wanted to say. That was the first time - like ohhhh - I went home and told Mom and Dad, "You really should have pushed us you know." And mom goes, "You guys didn't want to." But I said, "You were the adults!"*

Deanna remarked she felt resentful toward her parents. If she had learned Urdu she would have been able to share more fully with her grandmother. She felt a distance between herself and her grandmother. Deanna felt a lot of tension around this incident. The first one was her inability to speak Urdu and the other was the placement of Urdu as a second language to English. I suspect her homecoming to Pakistan only reinforced a growing suspicion that she was more Canadian than Pakistani. For her, I believe this wasn't a homecoming at all. I asked Deanna if she grieved this as a loss and her reply was no. Her thinking was that one couldn't grieve something one does not have. She regretted not being able to speak the Urdu language because it prevented her from getting acquainted with her grandmother but otherwise at the time she said she didn't miss not being culturally Pakistani. Deanna made this comment:

> *The way I look at it I don't think I could grieve if I don't know what I have lost. I can't grieve the loss if I don't think I lost anything. I would consider myself as Canadian first of Pakistani descent. I was raised in this culture and the language and the customs. I have the Pakistani influence and cultures, which will always be there, but I think in terms of me passing my values down to my kids or nieces is less. For example Eid means less to my niece than to us. I could grieve the loss of the culture in her but she won't grieve it. She won't have Eid the way we have Eid. You know like Native people. You know how the elders always say to the kids, "They're losing their culture." They are grieving it more than the kids because the kids don't know what they have lost. This is the life I know.*

Thread #2: Deanna's fight to wear Western clothing

Deanna related it was in Grade 6 that she began having arguments with her mother about clothing. She did not want to seem different from other children. Deanna noted at this time her own mother was also becoming westernized and would only don her sari outfits for dinner parties. Displacing the Urdu language with the English language led the way for displacing East Indian outfits with Canadian style clothing. Deanna remembered this one incident with her mother.

> *"You gotta dress a certain way, Mom." And I remember going to a store and fighting with my mom. "I want to dress this way!! I want to dress this way!! I want these clothes!!" And I really pushed it. My parents were quite liberal in their thinking like they weren't like most Pakistani families. We had the culture at home but they didn't think or feel we had to dress this way or be this way all the time. They were quite liberal.*

The tension Deanna felt, I believe, around clothing, emphasized her need to belong to the Canadian culture to the near exclusion of Pakistani culture. In Grade 6, she said she did not want to wear East Indian clothing because this would make her look too different. She attempted to resolve this tension by fighting with her mother and finally getting her mother to let her have her own way. For Deanna the loss of her Urdu language eased the way for further assimilation of Western cultural values. The fact that her mother began accepting a Canadian style of dress over her East Indian dress indicated a shift too for it signified that Deanna was right and that the Canadian culture was more important. Moreover, her father, who was raised by a liberal-thinking father, supported the trend occurring in the home. Stone (1995) suggests "one's clothes impart value to the wearer, both in the wearer's own eyes and in the eyes of the others" (p. 23). So it was with Deanna. She said she wanted to fit in.

Thread #3: Deanna' search for Pakistani literature

Deanna discovered while growing up she had to search for South Asian writers. She remembered reading a lot of white Anglo-Saxon heroines. She said she felt she was losing a sense of her Pakistani background. She asserts,

> *When I see an Indian author I buy the book right away because I think they are going to write about something that I experience or I could relate to. I remember the first book I got was this one book about a Pakistani girl in the desert. I thought if there were books that had East Indian content it would have been probably better for me.*

Because there was little Pakistani literature to read Deanna said that over time she began identifying with European characters. Perhaps, if she read Pakistani literature, she said she would have had a stronger identity as a Pakistani. Deanna believed that being constantly faced with white characters on television and in the required readings at her school and in the community libraries and stores, she was forced to identify with white heroines. Because the representation of Muslim women was invisible in any of her readings, she did not have that reminder. Deanna said it was natural to assimilate white Eurocentric culture because she was bombarded with it everywhere.

Not being able to find literature with Pakistani content made Deanna feel invisible. She felt tension in not being able to see a reflection in the literature that she read as a way of staying in touch with her Pakistani identity. Mukherjee (1998) points out that, "Racist texts . . . diminish nonwhite people's humanity" (p. 115). Deanna said she observed that non-white characters were almost rendered invisible by the small part they had in literature. Johnston (1996) speaks to this invisibility of minorities. She says that there "are few opportunities for these students to connect with texts which may resonate with their own cross-cultural histories and traditions and even fewer opportunities for them to engage critically in deconstructing texts that misrepresent or exoticize the experiences of non-Western people" (p. 1).

Thread #4: Deanna's fight to celebrate Christmas

One of the memorable events for Deanna was Christmas. How was she to resolve the conflict of being Canadian when she could not celebrate Christmas like her friends? She wanted to be part of the whole scene with its glamour of gifts, parties, concerts, and decorations. Christmas became a big issue in her home as she was growing up because she felt she was missing out on a lot of fun for Eid is the official religious observances of the Muslims. Wilber (1964) notes that the Eid al-Fitr "is a festival of rejoicing and charity marking the end of the ordeal of Ramadan (a time of fasting)" and the Bakr-i-Eid or Eid al-Azha is a "four day commemoration of Abraham's readiness to obey God to the point of sacrificing his son" (p. 91). Both Eids are marked with prayer, giving of gifts to the poor, feasts, new clothing, and gifts to friends and family.

> *We used to say, "We don't want Eid." Mom and Dad would say, "Eid is like your Christmas." One day we decided to get a Christmas tree and so we told Dad that we wanted to have one. Dad said, "No, you cannot have a Christmas tree. That is blasphemy." And my mom on the other side said, "Yeah, you can have the Christmas tree." My sister and I said, "We're not celebrating Christmas by putting the Christmas tree in our house, dad. It doesn't mean we are Christians. We just want to celebrate the commercial aspect of it." "Okay, you guys, you could have a Christmas tree." But he wasn't happy for the longest time. So somehow over time we changed it and we started having Christmas dinners and the family spending time together and putting up yearly Christmas trees.*

Deanna's pressure on her parents and her father's reluctant agreement reinforced her position of belonging to mainstream Canadian culture. She believed that over time more and more Pakistani cultural and religious practices were being displaced in favour of Canadian cultural celebrations. Deanna said that her parents argued over the increasing displacement of Eid celebrations by Christian mainstream celebrations. Her father was very unhappy over the changes he saw in his family. Deanna noted that as long as they kept the Eid as a sacred practice and Christmas as a commercial activity, her father allowed Christmas trees, decorations, and dinner parties.

Deanna's cultural metamorphosis began with her immersion in the English language to the exclusion of her originary Urdu language and its eventual submersion. This new language gave her the tools to learn about Western culture. She began to wear Western dress, spoke the colloquial language of her friends, watched television programs and movies. Much of the literature she read was Eurocentric in nature and she learned to emulate white heroines. Hall (1997) says there are two systems of representations that enable one to communicate with others. The first system of representation is having the same conceptual map that allows one "to interpret the world in roughly similar ways" (p. 18). It is not enough, however, to have "a shared culture of meanings." We must also have "access to a shared language" which, Hall says, is "the second system of representation involved in the overall process of constructing meaning" (p. 18): Deanna's loss of the Urdu language enabled her to understand the world through the English language. The English language provided Deanna with the necessary conceptual map to communicate with other English speakers and begin developing a shared culture and history in Western Canada. The English language became the vehicle for Deanna's entry into mainstream culture exemplified by her insistence her family take part in Christmas.

Tension #3 - The Narrative Self

Introduction

The challenges that Deanna faced in her lifetime caused her to exist in a space filled with tensions and dilemmas. It was her return to Pakistan that permitted her to reflect upon her roots and her cultural location. It helped her realize that she belonged to a Canadian culture embedded with some Pakistani culture. Her meeting with a Chinese woman whose culture was Pakistani, she said, also helped her with understanding her own dilemma of being racially Pakistani but culturally Canadian. Lastly, she said, it was her experiences in working with First Nations children that made her realize that this mixing of cultures was an ongoing difficulty with minorities. In a sense, she said, she began to see the First Nations students also in a diaspora.

Lived Experiences around the Narrative Self

Thread #1: Deanna's visit to Pakistan

> *When we were in Pakistan of course we wore the traditional clothes. We covered our heads but the minute we walked through the door they knew we weren't from Pakistan. The people knew and that is when I realized, "Yeah, I am a Canadian of Pakistani descent." Before then, I would say I was Pakistani. I realized when I went there I didn't belong there - my ideologies were different, the way I thought, the way I acted, and the way I spoke. It was just different and it wasn't Pakistani.*

Deanna realized she belonged in Canada. She assimilated what she needed in order to survive but she says she understands now that her life here in Canada does not in any way limit her ability to learn Urdu in the future or to become more culturally Pakistani if she felt this became important. She made a choice of becoming Canadian. Radhakrishnan (1996) says, "my India is as much an invention or production as his (referring to his son). There is more than enough room for multiple versions of the same reality" (p. 208). He says further, "My point is that the diaspora has created rich possibilities of understanding different histories" (p. 210). His questions strive to answer the problem of authenticity – what does it mean to be an authentic Indian? I believe that is the same question Deanna has – what does she need to become in order to be an authentic Pakistani? Or Westerner? Or mainstream Canadian? These are constructs designed to help Deanna and other minorities label and put everything neatly on the page.

Thread #2: Deanna meets someone like herself

Deanna met a young woman who mirrored the same image of misrepresentations by others. The young woman she met was of Chinese descent but was culturally Pakistani. While in Toronto on a visit she complained that white Canadians mistakenly perceived her to be culturally Chinese because she looked Chinese.

> *My uncle who was raised in Hong Kong introduced me to this girl who was of Oriental descent but she spoke Urdu and she wore Pakistani clothing. She considered herself Pakistani. She said, "What I don't understand about Canada is this: when I studied in Toronto people would ask me where I was from and I told them I was from Pakistan. They would continue to ask, 'But what is your nationality?' I told them, ' I was Pakistani.' Then they said, 'No, you're not. You're Oriental.' I replied, 'No, I look Oriental but I am Pakistani and that is my identity. I live in Pakistan. I live in Pakistan, my parents live in Pakistan.' 'Oh, my gosh, this is what it is like! All because you look a certain way people assume that is your identity." I commented, "If I saw you I would have thought you were Chinese." This shocked me.*

La Belle (1988) believes that the mirror is "at once both the self and a radical otherness, an image privileged with a truth beyond the subjective and at the same time taken to be the very essence of that subjectivity" (p. 9). La Belle explains that women begin to explore their images in early childhood. She says that the French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, who explored the beginnings of self-consciousness in childhood observed that "'the mirror stage' begins in the first eighteen months of childhood" and that this "mirror stage" is "for Lacan a single, originary event" (p. 10). In addition, Hall (1997) noted that it is this reflection "or what Lacan calls the 'look from the place of the other,' during 'the mirror stage,' which allows the child for the first time to recognize itself as a unified subject, and relate to the outside world, to the 'Other'" (p. 237). The mirror confirms what one looks like and from the mirror one looks to others who bear a resemblance like one's parents and siblings. Hall goes on to say that "Franz Fanon . . . argued that much racial stereotyping and violence arose from the refusal of the white 'Other' to give recognition 'from the place of the other,' to the black person" (p. 238). Deanna's physical appearance represented a "non-white" image to white Canadians. The unseen part was Deanna's assimilation of Eurocentric mainstream values that she incorporated as part of her identity. She felt she was culturally white mainstream even though she didn't look the part.

Thread #3: Deanna's understanding of the doubling effect

The term "double" according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary has several meanings but enfolds the sense of duality. To speak of one's double would mean that an individual has a counterpart who resembles them in such as way as to be mistaken for him or her. According to Coates (1988), doubling means " when other people begin to be viewed as akin to ourselves; and when the self is projected into a space hitherto defined as other. As they interact, these processes create the climate of colonialism" (p. 32). Doubling occurs when the colonized takes on the attributes of the colonizer but is not seen by the colonizer as possessing those attributes. The colonizer cannot overlook the outer layer or appearance of the colonized. Hence, the colonized has a double image: the outer layer portrays his race while his inner layer projects attributes of the colonizer's culture such as language. Hall (1997) explains this representation of "otherness" reduces a group of people to its "essence" (p. 245). He notes "stereotyping reduces, essentializes, naturalizes and fixes 'difference'" and it "symbolically fixes boundaries, and excludes everything which does not belong" (p. 258). Deanna believed that when other people stereotyped her as Pakistani her inner self of Canadian was ignored. She felt that all those years of learning about a second culture was minimalized and rendered invisible by others. She yearned to be recognized as having dual cultures, one Pakistani and one Canadian.

Deanna started the long process of adopting mainstream culture. The practices of Muslim and Pakistani culture, however, remained visible in the traditions that the family carried on such as Eid although the meaning became obscured over time. Nevertheless, for Deanna, she believes that the self is not a constant factor. Similarly, if she were to return to Pakistan, she would have to relearn Pakistani culture. She stressed that some of the symbolic meaning of Eid is lost for her today. At the same time, she had not entirely adopted the meaning of Christmas. Instead she altered its symbols in such a way that some Christmas celebrations could be practiced within the Eid celebrations. This blending of certain cultural practices reminds me of hybridity where one set of symbols becomes displaced for another that is more current or fitting. In attempting to resolve and reduce the tensions she felt about racial discrimination and cultural loss, Deanna sought some kind of space in which to think about and negotiate for herself new meanings for Pakistani and Western culture within her own experience. She extends this space to include her teaching/administrative practice,

> *What shocked me when I was working out here in this community was this whole thing about Native and mixed blood. I had my own perceptions of what Native people looked like but I thought nothing about it. He's like an apple - he's red on the outside and white on the inside. We have our own terms - like Oreos - brown on the outside, white on the inside. I'm thinking, "Why is that that bad? Why is it*

> *bad acting more than one way? It doesn't make one any less. Is it fear that you're going to lose your culture - you're going to lose who you are?"*

This concern translated into a compassion for First Nations children who were caught in the middle between mainstream culture and their own Cree culture. She says that her experiences living between the two worlds of Pakistan and Canada and teaching First Nations children has added to her sense of becoming. Deanna said that her own understanding of her identity or selfhood was that it is always changing. She said that each day brought some brand new experience and adds some new aspect to her selfhood.

Thread #4: Deanna's journey

> *I think I was always searching trying to find out where I belonged and finally in the last two years I finally came to the realization that I belong to me. I belong within me. As long as I am happy within me I know who I am. It doesn't matter where I belong. People can see what they want. I believe that anything negative that happens in your life you learn something from it. As painful as it may be, you learn something and you have to. Otherwise, it is a waste.*

Deanna believed the obstacles that faced her only strengthen her will to come to terms with her difficulties of racism. She has come to believe that one could grow from negative experiences. Deanna resisted being stereotyped. She believed she was a Pakistani-Canadian. The Urdu language was displaced early in her life in favour of English. The longer her family remained in Canada the more Pakistani culture was being displaced in favour of Canadian mainstream values. For example, many Muslims continue to wear headdresses but Deanna and her mother and sister bare their heads in public. This cultural displacement of Pakistani values and a transformation into the meld of Canadian-Pakistani culture reminds me of Bhabha's cultural hybridity. In order to have a better grasp of how Deanna was able to transform her early Pakistani culture into a hybridized Pakistani-Canadian one, it became necessary to examine the concepts of the "mirror image," "doubling," "the Other," "stereotyping," and "cultural hybridity." This transformation of her culture gives her a sense of power in determining where she belongs and who she is. It also helps her understand that this cultural transformation is fluid. Bhabha (1994) states, "it is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated" (p. 2).

Chapter Four

Exploring William's Postcolonial Landscape

Narrative Beginnings

Introduction

I often wondered what it would be like to be white, male, and Protestant growing up in Canada. When I began my research, I looked around our school for someone who would fit what seemed to be such a category and who would be willing to participate in my study. William, our school library assistant, agreed. I discovered William had spent ten years in Papua New Guinea. I wondered how those experiences impacted his life. He said his experiences in Papua New Guinea enabled him to understand those of different ethnic backgrounds and stimulated an interest in working with First Nations students.

At the beginning of our conversation William described his family background as white Anglo-Saxon Protestant. He said the ideology surrounding this specific cultural and racial location prevented him from interacting with those who came from different ethnic backgrounds. His grandparents, he said, believed that WASPs were on a higher racial and cultural order than immigrants and coloured people. Even though his mother, a teacher and political activist, he said, taught him at an early age that people were equal, she didn't or couldn't provide him with the means to test her premise of human equality. It wasn't until he left Saskatchewan that he began to interact with those with different backgrounds. He began to realize how insular his growing up years were. It was at this point in his life that he began to experience tensions around race and culture.

Beginnings

Grandparents' family background

William said his maternal Scottish and Irish ancestors immigrated to Canada in the 1700s. He is not too sure about the arrival date of his paternal English ancestors but it seems likely they arrived at about the same time. It became apparent in my conversations with William that his family tree consisted of Irish, English, and Scottish ancestors. William said there was a family belief that family members were to marry within their own racial and cultural heritage. His grandparents once refused to go to one of their daughter's wedding because she was marrying a former Catholic even though their future son-in-law had converted to the United Church. William said there now are Ukrainians in their family tree, something that would not have happened 75 years ago. He commented on the kind of thinking his ancestors passed down,

> *I always had a very strong Canadian identity and that has been reinforced throughout my life knowing that I was Canadian and you know I come from an Scottish-English-Irish background. When they came as settlers to this country they felt that Canada was theirs first and foremost and then it belonged to the Natives and then it belonged to who ever else came along. Anglo-Saxon Protestants believed that it was theirs and there are books written on that.*

In later conversations, William explained his early childhood teachings from school, home, and community helped him construct his beliefs about the social order of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. He said his grandparents believed Canada was their land foremost, and this teaching, he said, helped him construct what he perceived as a white Canadian identity that he carried overseas to Papua New Guinea. Frankenberg (1994), with reference to the work of Edward Said, states, "If a common thread runs through the whole range of instances of colonial discourse, it is the construction of alterity along racial/cultural lines - the construction of others conceived as fundamentally different from, and inferior to, white European, metropolitan selves" (p. 63). William's sense of identity as a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant did not come into question until he went to Papua New Guinea.

William's mother

During a conversation that delved into his family history, William brought in some photographs of his mother, Norma, to give me an idea of what she looked like when she was a young woman growing up on the Prairies. I found one photograph memorable as it portrayed his mother and her six sisters fashionably dressed in finely-tailored suits and dresses. It seemed to me William was telling me that his mother and her sisters were typically upper middle-class.

Norma graduated from high school when she was 17 and then went to Normal School for two years. Afterwards she started teaching school. She taught in a number of small schools starting in northern Saskatchewan. When William was growing up, he spent his summers in Manitoba with his relatives because his mother was going to the University of Saskatchewan to work on her degree in education. William said his mother was a fighter. One of his favourite memories was her fight with the local school board:

> *Girls were not allowed to wear slacks to school. Mother was concerned about little girls wearing skirts all the time. And you know they had terrible storms during the winter and so she went after the school board to get the rules changed. And after a long, long battle the school board agreed that girls could wear slacks. They couldn't wear jeans. And once she covered that hurdle she got into the fight about women teachers wearing slacks and they finally said, "Do what you want, Norma."*

This excerpt illustrates the kind of power he saw Norma had in the community. This kind of power stems not only from being white but also from her many social and political connections. For example, she was very active in the United Church, taught Sunday school, belonged to Church groups and a lodge, and was very active in provincial politics. William said his mother's love for education and reading inspired her to go ahead and fight for the first library in Unity, the small Saskatchewan town where they lived. The women in the community rallied around her. Today this library is regional.

William's beginnings

William recollected his family first lived in a little community called Sunny Glen where his father was a grain buyer for Federal Grain and his mother was the local one-room schoolteacher. Life seemed stable and comfortable, he said. However, his father died suddenly when he was three years old forcing his mother out of the rented grain buyer's house. She then took William and his sister back to her family home in Russell, Manitoba until she secured a teaching job in Unity, Saskatchewan the following September.

William would spend his summer holidays in Manitoba every year. He had lots of activities like swimming, summer camps with the United Church, and living on the farm with horses to ride. His uncle raised purebred Aberdeen Angus cattle and from a very young age they were at fairs all over the country showing cattle and preparing them for the ring. When he left his relatives in Manitoba to return for school in Unity he did not experience much change because the community he belonged to was also close-knit and supportive. He said about his early childhood there,

> *You always had a friend. You were always doing something. Every day you did something. For example, we all went to the skating rink after school and then home for supper and back to the skating rink again until about nine o'clock at night. Or we might go curling every day. It was just a great place to be.*

William commented that church was also important in uniting the people he knew. Life for William centred on school, church, and Cub Scouts. Children just progressed through each of the groups. There were also sports in which every child was expected to participate. For example, when he started school he and his sister would go straight from school to the rink. Once his mother finished work she would pick them up at the rink. William related there were always people at the rink that were looking after them and so she never had to worry about his safety. William made this conclusion about his community life,

> *Everybody in town knew everybody else. Unlike most kids today we grew up in the same house over the years and had the same friends from school. We were all part of the community. We lived together and we got married and died together. And everybody in the community had their own individuality but we were part of a group and all the parts made up the whole community.*

Present day William

When William returned from Papua New Guinea he said he didn't want to go back to working in mainstream libraries in Canada. He said he wondered where he would find a fit. He thought to himself, " Why not go into a First Nations library?" He applied for a librarian position with Peguis First Nations and was there for several years. After leaving Peguis First Nations, he serendipitously met a former teacher from Peguis Reserve in Edmonton. She told him her husband was director of a reserve school that became band controlled recently. William thought it would be a real challenge. He applied, got the job as a library assistant, and has been at our school ever since.

William said it has been a satisfying role for him at this school. He attributed much of that feeling to the funding and support from the school board. He said the library had made a big difference in the school and the community. In the last five years elders from the community have come into the school to identify cultural artefacts and archival photographs. He claimed such an endeavour bonded the students and community.

> *Kids get to see the photographs in the school and it gives them a sense of history and they recognize their grandmother when she was a young girl and things like that. They have their sense of history and their sense of belonging to this community. I think that is the real strength for the community; that we have their history.*

One of William's roles is to read to students at the Kindergarten and Primary Schools. He has been doing this since he arrived. One day when one of the classes at our school came into the library he overheard a comment from a student that, he said, warmed his heart. He said,

> *There are kids in school now that I read to in Kindergarten. I used to go over to the Primary on special occasions and read over there when they asked me to come over. And so these kids have known me since they started school and that is why they call me "the old dude."*

William reflected upon one of his reading experiences to a group of Kindergarten children. He said the book he chose was one students seem to love because of the rhythms and pictures. He said laughingly,

> *There is a book called "The Tally-po" which is a rather frightening ghost story. One day I was reading this story and suddenly this little kid's hand shot up into the air and he yelled at me, "I'd shoot the ____." They just get so involved and excited!*

William said he believed that if kids came to school consistently they would be exposed to more literature, just like he had as a little boy. Our library provides a literature-based storytelling program for the Kindergarten and Primary schools. He said he feels positive about this library program at our school for it involves getting parents into the school to borrow library books. He said one First Nations mother became a member of the library and came in every few days to sign out stacks of books. She began reading to her small children at home.

Tension #1- Race

Introduction

William's first set of tensions occurred around First Nations people. He recalled memories of his grandmother's treatment of those with different ethnic backgrounds. He became aware of his own ignorance of First Nations people while growing up on the Prairies. His few interactions with Natives did not permit the erasures of stereotypical images embedded in the texts of his day. While growing up, he said, he felt tension around his grandmother's and his mother's view on human equality. This view of

Canada was, however, challenged when he went to Papua New Guinea. It was there that he had to deal with his own Eurocentric ideology about other races and cultures.

Lived Experiences Around the Tension of Race on the Prairies

Thread #1: Childhood experiences with racist ideology

William said that much of the literature he read as a child was Eurocentric. He recalled how his baby-sitter would read to him and when his mother came home she would also read to him in the evenings. He said he was able to read when he first started school. He remembered his immersion in reading,

> *There were standard things like "Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories" and "Uncle Wiggly" - that type of book. There were a few magazines that we had around. If there was a "MacLean's" magazine she would pick it up and read it to us. One of the other things that we had was radio and there were children's hours all the time. We listened to a vast amount of radio. So there was no shortage of material.*

William's mother also took a class in children's literature while she was in university. She signed up for the reading material before the course started. All of the books arrived and so they had lots of reading material. William commented that all of these books were fundamentally Eurocentric in nature. William said it wasn't until he left Papua New Guinea that he began to get a better sense of how the language and portrayal of minorities shaped his thinking. We both shared an experience of reading "Little Black Sambo" as children and never questioned the stereotypical imagery of African people.

William said that his exposure to First Nations people was limited and what he gleaned from television and books shaped his thinking about this group of people.

William recalled how he saw First Nations people for the first time. It happened when he was at his aunt's farm that was located close to the Waywaysacappo Reserve. He described them as being very different:

> *Those people scared the crap out of me I'll tell you. All of a sudden this wagon filled with all these Indians would pull into the driveway. It was a long driveway and here are four little kids tearing around scared to death (with laughter) and they would be coming in for old newspapers, old rags, and things like that and also grease so they could make soap. They would terrify us and my aunt would have all of them in the house for tea, biscuits, and things like that. Ohh, and we would be hiding, but all of that was from the movie culture thing. Certainly they were apart from what we were, very much apart.*

William said he did not have any association with First Nations people before then. The tension he felt, he said, was trying to understand the stereotypical image of Indians that he saw portrayed in movies and real "Indians" who were sitting in his aunt's kitchen having tea and biscuits. His second experience with First Nations people was vicarious. His sister was taught for one year by a First Nations teacher when she was in Grade 4,

> *This Native teacher taught all those years with my mother and everybody else in town and no mention was ever made of the fact that she was a Native. I don't know where she came from or where her reserve would have been but I know from my mother that she was a full-blooded Indian.*

When I asked William for more details about the identity of this First Nations teacher, he looked surprised. He said he didn't know because at the time it was not important. He said it was because she just seemed to "fit in." This fitting in reminded me of what Chambers (1994) wrote about the "sense of being rootless, of living between worlds, between a lost past and a non-integrated present . . . " (p. 27). This First Nations teacher had no name and no history that William was aware of. I believe the significance of this story came for William at a later date. After his return from Papua New Guinea it came to symbolize the invisibility of First Nations people. The experience portrayed an image of Native people drifting on the Canadian landscape, voiceless and nameless. William said that he became aware of a tension when he began working with the students in Papua New Guinea and he had to deal with his own belief system about Indians and other marginalized people and human equality.

William's memory of this nameless First Nations woman reminded me of an incident at the time of my research. One day, William gave me a book to read *I Once Knew an Indian Woman*. The title didn't seem appealing and when I opened up the book, these words jumped up at me, " she was a noble savage" (Cutler, 1973, p. 2). I quickly read the book noting that Madame Dey was an Iroquois woman who faced her suffering "nobly," retaining an almost saint-like quality at the end of her life. Her social situation never changed and it seemed to me that Madame Dey made the best of what she got.

It was only after several months that I actually got the courage to ask William why he thought I would be interested in this book. He was taken aback and said he would re-read it because when he read it many years ago the term "noble savage" did not strike him as derogatory. He wrote in an e-mail,

> *Cutler wrote this biography 40 years after she first came into contact with Madame Dey. I think in 1927, the term "noble savage" might have been deemed appropriate or certainly not inappropriate. Cutler may have used the term because Madame Dey was from a background totally alien to her own. She could also have been influenced by the writings of James Fenimore Cooper (a popular author even at that time). One of the reasons I suggested it to you is that it made me feel good. It's a story told lovingly of a woman of great dignity, compassion, and understanding who made choices and lived with them.*

William said his second reading made him re-think the term "noble savage." He said that the term didn't bother him at the time and his current reading only allowed him to place the term of "noble savage" within the context of the writing at the time. He began to invest time into re-reading material. He asked me, "What do you think of this description, 'dusky forest-people' for First Nations people?" I said I thought it offensive because the description does not speak to uniqueness of individuals nor does it portray First Nations people as possessing a social structure or any structure for that matter. William nodded in agreement. William's query therefore opened up an avenue, a space for sharing and negotiating our thoughts about stereotypical imagery in texts.

During the course of our discussion of this particular book, I wondered where this term of "noble savage" came from. I went on a search and discovered that Rousseau, a French philosopher, coined the term to explain his ideology of man's natural and preferred state. He envisioned the primitive man as being free from the constraints of society that created inequality in wealth and status. Conroy (1998) says Rousseau believed "the original savage man is gone, replaced by a civil man who is artificial and, in modern terms, stressed out (p. 192). {The savage} breathes only repose and liberty, he wants to live and relax" (p. 23). Conroy goes on to say that the term "savage" was not to be identified with "the primitive peoples who were then being discovered by travelers and discussed by philosophers" because "those primitives had already strayed too far from nature and advanced too close to society" (p. 21). However, the "distinction" between primitive society and the savage was never "formalized" since Rousseau used "primitive societies as examples for his conjectures about the state of nature" (p. 21). This term continued its use as a descriptor for First Nations people. It implied that First Nations people, viewed by early European explorers, possessed spiritual and physical human characteristics but were not in the same league with Europeans in terms of political and social order.

Rousseau's ideology of man's return to a more natural state or "primitive" state becomes convoluted because of what constitutes a "primitive" state. By using such a term as "noble savage," Rousseau unloaded connotations of "bestiality," "savagery," and "lawlessness" upon the meaning of "primitive" societies. Adding "noble" whitewashes the negative aspect of the term. The term is paradoxical: one cannot be noble and be savage at the same time. Macedo and Bartholomé (1999) say, in reference to such terms as "border rats," "wetbacks," "aliens," and so forth, that "we need to understand fully the interrelationship between symbolic violence produced through language and the essence of the experience of racism" (p. 5). William noted that his experiences in Papua New Guinea forced him to rethink his impressions about First Nations people. The stereotypical imagery of people who were not Anglo-Saxon Protestant and the language used to convey those images were embedded within much of the literature he read as a child. William commented that his early reading shaped his thinking about aboriginal and other non-white people.

Thread #2: William's conflict over racist ideology

One of the things William said he remembered from his family background was how his mother spoke about the racial discrimination towards others in his community.

His grandmother did not tolerate those who were culturally different from her and she controlled who was allowed into the Women's Institute on the Prairies. William said,

> *I'll tell you they used to have Women's Institutes and my grandmother was a member of the Women's Institute all the time. Unless you were white Anglo Saxon Protestant you could not come into this group. Women's Institute was a strong part of Canadian rural history. My grandmother would have voted out anyone who wasn't Anglo-Saxon Protestant. Believe me, she was a racist. My mother said that many times. Apparently there was this wonderful Grecian lady who wanted to be a member and she was kept out.*

William commented that he did not feel much tension on racial inequality while growing up although at times he did wonder about his grandmother's viewpoint on racial and ethnic discrimination which contrasted with his mother's teachings at home on racial equality. This tension around race for the most part was submerged while he was living in Unity, Saskatchewan and in Russell, Manitoba.

When I asked William to reread the selections I chose from his transcripts, he recollected his mother's experience with racial and cultural discrimination. He wrote,

> *During World War II, mother was teaching in a community which was largely of German descent. Mothers of her pupils formed a quilting club to make quilts to send to soldiers in France. Mother was a great quilter but she alone in the community was not asked to join the club. When the quilts were dispatched, mother was asked to write a covering letter in French, which she did.*

I believe William wanted to share this part of his family history to show that his mother was hurt by this exclusion. He portrayed his mother as one who, despite the rejection, remained magnanimous. William asserted it was this image that kept him going despite the many difficulties he faced in Papua New Guinea.

Lived Experiences Around the Tension of Race in Papua New Guinea

William in Papua New Guinea

When William finished high school in Unity he moved to Saskatoon for further education. He began working for the University of Saskatchewan as a librarian and was happy in this role. Then, he said, he became bored with life in general. One cold winter day he decided he needed a change, but he didn't have the kind of money to allow him extensive travel on his own. He applied with CUSO and, after an interview in 1974, was sent out to Papua New Guinea. According to Smillie (1985), who worked with CUSO since 1967, the organization, "remains the only major Canadian presence in many countries of Asia, Africa, the Pacific, and the Americas, giving it a unique and sometimes spectacular vantage point from which to view and participate in the beginning of the Third World's modern era" (p. viii). Smillie attempts to explain the meaning of CUSO without colonial terminology. For example, on one occasion he coined the word "cooperant" instead of "volunteer" because that word implied "priggish self-righteousness" (p. viii). He tried to replace the word "developing" because that word implied evolving "from a lower to a higher level" (p. ix). However, the word "developing societies" and the term "Third World" remained. CUSO provided William an opportunity to examine his life and become aware of his tensions around race and culture.

When he first arrived in Papua New Guinea he said he had "a culture shock." William suddenly became acutely aware that he was in the minority. Rosaldo (1994) suggested that "when decision-making rooms suddenly include people who represent gender and racial diversity, people who once worked in these rooms with an exclusive sense of entitlement can feel uncomfortable" (p. 213). William began to be aware that the only rooms he worked in were those in the majority. He found himself in rooms of cultural and racial diversity. He said he felt misplaced.

William remembered his feelings of loneliness and insecurity. These feelings were accentuated by his reaction to the very hot climate. Fortunately, he said, the government was willing to pay for a working month's vacation in the Highlands so he could become acclimatized. He then had to find transportation in the sprawling city and find furnishings for his apartment. This took several weeks. The next hurdle was the language barrier and slowly he picked up "pidgin," the language that allowed for a rudimentary but standardized communication between the diverse groups of people. Lea and Irwin (1967) say New Guinea pidgin "developed from the visits of the recruiters for the Queensland canefields." It consists of a vocabulary based upon English, German, and Tolai which has been "criticized by many (as) to be an inferior language which still carries overtones of the master-servant relationship" (p. 96). This was the language William was learning. William said the feeling of isolation and difference was almost overwhelming. He said he knew he had to tough it out because of the two-year agreement with CUSO.

William said Papua New Guinea received her independence one year after his arrival. On Independence Eve in 1975, he said he remembered going to the main wharf to observe the celebration. But, he said, he did not see much joy. The hundred and one gun salute went off, and, when the fireworks display finished, he thought the people were saddened.

> *People were weeping. They were not ready for independence. They did not want independence. They were afraid of what was going to happen and certainly things did happen. This unhappiness proved that the old administration had a lot of control in the country. It was a very solemn occasion and I think people were honestly afraid of what was going to happen.*

William said he expected that the Papua New Guineans would have been overjoyed with independence from colonial rule. He said he began to wonder why they were saddened and he said this day marked his interest in Papua New Guinea. His intentions for staying two years evolved into three years and then into four. Finally, after ten years, he decided to return to Canada.

Thread #1: William's experience with colonialism

William said he was amazed when he first came to Papua New Guinea that a colonial era still existed in the twentieth century. He said he was surprised many of his students addressed him as "Masta" meaning master. He said he felt embarrassed because it revealed a kind of master-slave relationship that positioned him as master by virtue of his skin colour. He was used to being called by his first name and he said he liked that kind of informality. He recalled,

> *They started out calling me, "Sir." Some kids who lived in the real boonies in the country called me Masta because white men have always been Masters. If you were in class students would stand up and say "Sir" at every question or answer. It became terribly time-consuming. You couldn't really get a discussion going when they were going on with everyone saying, "Sir. Sir." It took a year to break that habit because it was engrained in them. If they had not stood up and said, "Sir," and just shouted out the question they would have been whipped. This*

> *would have been done by colonial rulers, well, teachers, headmasters, and people like that. I had to get them over that and have them just call me William or Bill.*

William said when he finally got the students to call him by his first name he had another problem. He had already become familiar with "pidgin" and so he was able to communicate with most of his students on an everyday basis, but the delivery of lessons was a different matter. For William who only spoke English in Canada this was a daunting experience. He said he tried over and over to make himself understood. Then one day it occurred to him what he was doing wrong:

> *After a few weeks it dawned on me that people did not understand a word I was saying. Someone told me that English might be his or her seventh or eighth language. I began to realize that they would listen to what I said, translate it in their own language and translate it back into English. When I finally learned to slow down and wait for the student my lessons were more successful.*

After this understanding, William said teaching became pleasurable for himself and, he thought, for his students. William believed the tension about not being able to teach his students was resolved within a fairly short period of time. One of the difficulties William said was his growing awareness there was an undercurrent of hatred by some of the black people towards himself and other white people. He said he believed some of the Papua New Guineans thought all white people represented what William called "the old guard staff, the pre-independence staff, who went along pretty straight lines on how to treat the local people." These feelings of hatred oftentimes were disguised in the form of defiance. It was only in later years that he said he began to be more fully aware of how deep this sense of hatred was for pre-independence colonial masters.

Thread #2: Encountering hatred

When William first started work in Papua New Guinea he was a librarian. He found the experience difficult, he said, because he worked alongside an employee who hated white people. He said a lot of the Papua New Guinean library staff had very low-level training or none at all. His job was to train. He remembers one person who had been in the public service for a very long time and had job security. He described this incident:

> *We had one fellow by the name of Eaki. He hated me because I was a white man. You know he had this old colonial past. He was quite a bit older than I was. It was a constant battle working with this man you know. I had to force him to do what I wanted and he resisted all the way down the line but because he was a member of the public service he was protected. One time the photocopier broke down. There was a technician coming in from Australia who could fix it and I said to Eaki, "The photocopier is broken. Do not touch it." And then I went for lunch. When I came back the photocopier was spread from one end of the room to the other. I wanted to kill him (with laughter).*

William said he felt angry because his wishes were not respected. He could not understand why someone would not do what he was asked. The tension he said he felt was trying to get along with someone who hated him because of his colour. William's colour represented power, prestige, and privilege. Eaki hated what that colour represented.

Eaki's situation is not so remarkable in light of what Fanon (1967) says about how the colonized person feels when another culture has been imposed upon his/her own. The colonized person feels disempowered with the loss of his/her language, his/her customs, and the "sources upon which they were built"; and, has to deal with another "civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him" (p. 110). Fanon states that the "black man among his own in the twentieth century does not know at what moment his inferiority comes into being through the other" (p. 110). It would seem that Eaki's feeling of inferiority resulted in jealousy, revenge, and hatred. I believe this is what William encountered as he gave his order to Eaki who, tired of the white man's imperialism, struck out at a much younger man, knowing he would not be fired from his job.

The relationship of oppressor and oppressed can be understood in Stowe's (1966) novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* first serially published in 1851-1852. One of the characters, George, cries out from his dehumanizing burden of slavery, "My master! and who made him my master? That's what I think of - what right has he to me?" (p. 26). I believe that is what Eaki was feeling. Many of the Papua New Guineans who saw their parents and grandparents entrenched in this master-slave relationship must have felt as Eaki did. Friere (1990) speaks of this polarity of oppressor and oppressed as one in which the oppressed perceives of his freedom as becoming like his oppressor. He says, "their perception of themselves as opposites of the oppressor does not yet signify engagement in a struggle to overcome the contradiction; the one pole aspires not to liberation, but to identification with its opposite pole" (p. 30). So it is with Eaki who in his long-term employment as a civil servant saw himself in the white man's role but he himself could never be "white" like William. Loomba (1998) explains Fanon's concept of black skin, white masks as "blackness confirms the white self, but whiteness empties the black subject" (p. 144). Not understanding where his feelings of inferiority came from would have caused a great deal of frustration in Eaki and it is this exasperation in not knowing that resulted in defiance. For William, it was simply interpreted as racial hatred.

Tension #2 - Culture

Introduction

William said he believed his early life reflected much of what was going on in white mainstream Canadian society. Even with the voluminous amount of reading he did as a child, he said he was not aware of the discrepancy between his life and the lives of others. The reading material available to him while growing up was Eurocentric in nature and reinforced his own position in Canada. However, when he went to Papua New Guinea and became more and more involved with its cultural events; the contrast to his own culture, he said, created tension for him. First, he said his presence at his students' deliveries allowed him to take a special interest in the children of Papua New Guinea. He said his stance on cargo cults, his sorrow over Kari's death, and his pride as a volunteer in the South Pacific Festival of the Arts were an extension of his involvement with the people of Papua New Guinea.

Lived Experiences Around the Tension of Culture in Papua New Guinea

Thread #1: William's experience with babies

William said he became involved in the delivery of babies of his female students. It became such a routine thing that he would organize his final exam timetable around their delivery dates. He would get calls at two or three in the morning. Some of the kids would run over to his apartment to get him up. He remembered this incident,

> *One girl, who was from the Tuvalu Island, was having a baby from a fellow who was from the Solomon Islands. They would not get married until she had proven her fertility. There was no sin in having this baby first. They had to prove their fertility somehow. Anyway the nurses sent me straight into the delivery room and she was still delivering. This was the first one for me! (with laughter). I left food for her and I said, "I suppose you will want the whole day off." This was 4:00 in the morning. She was in class that afternoon with the baby, ready to learn.*

The tension in this story was the crossing of boundaries between his values and those of the Papua New Guineans. He said he was shocked at being asked to drive mothers to the hospital since he believed this was not part of the teaching role. But he also knew he probably had the only means available for his students. He said he never expected to be part of the delivery process however. He said he accepted that young women were having babies out of wedlock because it was a cultural standard but he said he found it to be a different matter to be included in the delivery process. William said he could not imagine doing this in Canada. The more astonishing part of the whole birthing process, he said, was that the mother usually was in class that same afternoon and fully expected him to hold the newborn while she was studying. At first he was shocked but after a while it became common practice. This was one feature that William found in Papua New Guinea that was most appealing: the physical contact between mothers and their offspring. He added in a later e-mail when I queried about holding babies he commented this was the most enjoyable part of his stay there. He said it was so totally different from the Canadian mainstream where he believes that children are pushed into individual roles as soon as possible.

> *Yep, let me tell you, little black babies are so cute. You just want to pick them up and cuddle them and that will do it. Or, a mother would come in and sit down to do something and the kid was plopped in my lap and you rarely heard a kid cry because the minute the kid started to cry someone would pick up that baby and virtually they would never play on their own because there was always someone around in case they were upset.*
>
> *Some of our teaching staff had "white babies" which weren't nearly as cute or as colourful as "black babies." I used the term "black babies" because that is what they were. I didn't find the term offensive, nor did my students when I told them their babies were cute. Babies in Papua New Guinea are called "pikaninnies."*

William and I conversed about the use of the term "black babies." I wondered if that description was derogatory. I asked, "Did the Papua New Guineans mind you calling them black?" He said the Papua New Guinean students often referred to themselves as black and he believed that it was okay for him to use that term. He said he remembered this event:

> *I told you the story about supervising students on a boat through the tiny islands. One morning we entered a small harbour through an opening in the reef and had to wait until the sun changed position so that we could go out the opening again. All the students dived overboard so I followed. A few minutes later a student swam up to me and said, "Sharks are not attracted to black things in the water." I rapidly went up the anchor chain.*

Thread #2: The impact of the Cargo Cults

Lea and Irwin (1967) say the cargo cult was first reported in 1919. It was believed that if certain things were done, "other spirits would return in a large ship bringing a great cargo of European goods" (p. 96). Lea and Irwin noted how these "cult activities represent an attempt by the New Guineans to account for the Europeans having large quantities of 'cargo' whilst they have none" (p. 96). This reliance upon cargo cults resulted in a dramatic change in the lifestyle of the Papua New Guineans. William told the story about how another CUSO worker was concerned about the malnutrition among the children. She told him that Papua New Guinea was a lush country that provided food for the people before the various European and Australian takeovers. He said this nurse convinced the government officials to pass legislation that would make it mandatory for mothers to breastfeed,

> *When this legislation had passed I had all these females in class who were breastfeeding. Then the government passed a law saying women could not bring their babies to work or school. We had to flagrantly disagree with the government and I said to all my students, "Bring your babies to class." And I would be teaching a class with this kid on my hip. We got really close to these kids. All of these little kids knew you. It was really quite wonderful. When the mother would be doing a test somebody had to look after the baby (with laughter). I changed a lot of kids in my time. She would pass the baby to another mother and they nursed one another's kids. It never bothered the girls in class to be nursing when I was there and so I got quite used to it. There were more boobs than bookmarks.*

William said he came to understand that the term of "cargo cult" had religious significance as well as economic ones. He said many Papua New Guineans believed that white people were god-like with the power to magically create material goods and transport them by air or boat. William said he wanted to do something about this conception. He and the nurse persuaded the government to allow the women to attend school. He said he hoped that educating these women would be the first step towards true independence. The government relented and William was proud of his efforts. This was his first sense of empowering others who were not like his perceptions of himself. He said he began to understand much more of the impact colonialism had upon the people. This aroused much tension in him because in his readings as a young child, he was aware that the British began colonizing Canada in the 1600s and he began to understand what that meant for Native peoples in Canada.

Thread #3: The impact of Kari's death

William remembered working with Kari, a Papua New Guinean, who wanted to make a difference in his family's life and in Papua New Guinea. William said many people were proud of Kari because he was making the most of his education. William related this story,

> *I remember one fellow I worked with who also belonged to a community development group in Papua New Guinea. Kari finished his university and was working all the time and studying part time. He had a family with four or five kids and the whole bit. Then he was sent off to the London School of Economics to get his doctorate and one week after his graduation he dropped dead. I think it was because of all his hard work. That was really upsetting and it was a loss to Papua New Guinea.*

William said he remembered this story because it was rare for students to achieve this much in the school system. I asked William in an e-mail how he was impacted by Kari's death and he wrote,

> *I knew his family well. Had Kari not died there was a host of options in his life. He could have taken up a leading academic position at the University of PNG. He might have become a parliamentarian where he could have fought for the "grass roots." The list of things Kari could have done is endless. The one thing he would have been is the "common man," a man without pretensions.*

Swatridge (1985) says when the Papua New Guineans noted that when cargo "was dropped from aircraft, or unloaded from ships at wharves, and all that white men had to do to take possession of it was to make marks on a piece of paper" this eventually moved into the concept of education (p. 5). Swatridge says, "the English language took its place in the lengthening equation of perceived goods" (p. 14). When the Papua New Guineans began to see the relationship between the English language and money, they began to experience a faith "in the wage and prestige-earning returns from schooling" (p. 93). Kari would have wanted a better life for himself and for his people. He would have realized that in order to get more "goods," he had to take advantage of education to achieve this material end for himself and for his community. Education, I believe, would have been a great equalizer for Kari.

Thread #4: South Pacific festival of the arts

William said he began to get more involved in cultural activities in Papua New Guinea. One time he said performers of the South Pacific Festival of the Arts came to his city to perform. The College was closed while they were there because the performers were staying at the College and at the University. Because of this, the Government seconded the teachers to work as volunteers and he said he ended up working at several venues.

> *And so I saw right from the stage groups from all over the South Pacific. It was a wonderful experience. The performances did not start until 8:00 at night and didn't finish until two or three in the morning. It was a lot of work but everybody loved it. The Festival Committee supplied all the volunteers with distinctive uniforms and we were known all over the city. There were thousands and thousands of guests in the city.*

William said that at first he felt tension in standing out as a volunteer but the Festival was so successful that he said little attention was being given to the fact he was white. He enjoyed himself and for the first time he felt he belonged. Strathern (1981) comments that even among the Papua New Guineans ceremonial dress, masking, and painting define "the dimension of social communication. What people wear, and what they do with and to their bodies in general, forms an important part of the flow of information - establishing, modifying, and commenting on major social categories, such as age, sex and status, which are also defined in speech and in actions" (p. 15). In his new outfit, William portrayed an image of a volunteer and it gave him pride in belonging to the College and a pride in working with the Papua New Guineans. He said it was at this point he felt he was receiving a different kind of respect from the Papua New Guineans because he demonstrated through this uniform that he was proud to be a volunteer. This incident, William said, gave him a sense of working for the Papua New Guineans so they could forge their own destiny for themselves.

The colonized person wants recognition for the value of his culture and in so being recognized becomes visible and feels validated. William said he began to recognize the significance of some of the cultural attributes that made up the Papua New Guinean society and he felt compelled to follow them as, for example, in volunteering at the South Pacific of Festival Arts, in resisting prohibition of babies in class, and in recognizing Kari's intellectual ability and ambition. Bauman (1997) says, "The question is no longer how to get rid of the strangers and the strange, but how to live with them - daily and permanently" (p. 55). For William, he began a process in appreciating the differences in skin colour and culture. In one of our e-mails, William noted that if he met a Papua New Guinean today he would greet them with these words: "Yu hamamas tru" which means "Are you happy?"

Tension #3 - The Narrative Self

Introduction

William said he became aware of how insular his life in Unity was. He said he realized he had not dealt with the issues of human equality until his experiences with Papua New Guinean students. He said he began to realize the precarious nature of his stay in Papua New Guinea once its people started forging a destiny. He said he began to understand the rage among many of the Papua New Guineans was their response to the oppression of the former colonial powers. William said he began to realize that oppression created a wake of growing resentments towards "white" people who were generally perceived as colonial masters. This animosity often erupted into violence.

Lived Experiences Around the Narrative Self

Thread #1: William's first experience outside Unity

William said he never knew how divided his Prairie town really was until he was leaving for Papua New Guinea and he met Benny for the first time. He was sharing a room in the residence at the University of British Columbia.

> *I was assigned to this room with a fellow by the name of Benny. I asked him "Where are you from?" And he said, "Unity, Saskatchewan." I laughed. I said, "I beg your pardon - Unity, Saskatchewan? Never heard of you." "Yeah, I went to school there. I went to the separate school." I don't remember school teams ever playing against each other. There was a real division. So here's a kid who was virtually the same age as I was and I'd never seen him before. That's how the church divided the town.*

The tension William said he experienced was that he thought he knew everyone in Unity but he didn't. He was shocked to discover his world was insulated against

Catholics. He said he wondered what other groups were excluded. When he brought up the name of Benny to his mother she explained she knew the family on a political level. He began to realize how deep the United Church roots were in his hometown and how it served to isolate other people and cultures.

Thread # 2: William fears death on the Pacific

William said he was not returning to Canada for Christmas one year and agreed to help out by chaperoning the students on their break to various islands in the South Pacific. There was about sixty students who all slept on the ship's decks. He had a cabin to himself. He remembered a particularly scary event,

> *I was the only white person on this boat. I had been sitting in my cabin reading when suddenly the engine stopped and a boat pulled alongside. There was one black man in it and he said, " Sir, would you get in the boat with me?" I climbed out into this boat and I was rowed off to this little island and he rode away. I was absolutely terrified. Here, I was all alone in the Pacific!!! I was staring at the boat. The engines didn't start or anything like that and they started loading all the students into the boats and they all came into this little island to pick coconuts. Well, it turned out to be a matter of respect that I shouldn't have to sit with all these black kids in this boat and so I was given the honour of being taken over by myself. However, when we were coming back I just climbed into the boat with the kids, "You aren't leaving me!" We laughed. But this was a scary night I tell you.*

William said he was really afraid he would be left behind because of his skin colour and the unclear boundaries of how people were dealing with their Independence from colonial rulers. He felt a tension about being white and being despised as a colonial master. He said he believed for about ten minutes that he was going to perish alone on the Pacific and no one in Canada would ever see him again. He said he was relieved to learn he had misunderstood the significance of being taken alone on the boat and not all Papua New Guineans would take their postcolonial hatred to the extreme of leaving him to die in the Pacific.

William said he found it incredible this could have happened to him. But he admitted that over the years he got a sense of increasing hostilities being acted out towards white people. Just before he left, he said a good number of white people left Papua New Guinea commenting on the negative atmosphere. For William he began to realize that he had a set of new tensions. These new tensions centred on the increasing violence and uncertainty of the future of the children he taught. Lindholm (2001) states,

> Although morally reprehensible, these pervasive expressions of cruelty and rage are psychologically understandable as responses to anxieties about one's own self-certainty; scapegoating and demonizing others are powerful ways to relieve inner fears of chaos and psychic disintegration that can be aroused when boundaries between self and other are undermined. (p. 219)

William said he began to understand that violence was one option at the disposal of Papua New Guineans and it was this increasing violence that eventually persuaded him to leave his students and move back to Canada.

William said he began to notice his own assimilation of various cultural markers of Papua New Guinean society. He said he learned to speak the common language, grieved over the loss of Kari, travelled with his students in a boat to prove that he really is one of them, and even changed diapers. Loomba (1998) states,

> The recurrent images of black people, Moors and heathens and other outsiders converting to Christianity try to keep at bay another set of anxieties, those generated by the possibility of Christians "turning Turk" (a phrase that also enters the English language during the Renaissance and begins to stand in for all betrayals and desertions) and Europeans "going native." (p. 115)

William said he did not go native but assimilated parts of the Papua New Guinea culture that made sense to possess such as language, food, and some social customs. Although he spoke pidgin and he took on some cultural attributes like clothing he did not become Papua New Guinean. Instead he learned to appreciate the struggles for independence and a desire to create their own world after colonialism. William noted, however, that he was changed by his experience in Papua New Guinea. It was not a physical change but an emotional and spiritual one. He does not speak pidgin at our school but he said if he met a Papua New Guinean today it would be easy to take up from where he left off. This ability to cross from English to "pidgin" opens up a "space of negotiation," similar to the idea put forward by Homi Bhabha (1994) in which he describes the "in-between space" as a "third space of hybridity." This "in-between space" allows a person to try to understand the representations and symbolic undertones of another culture.

Said (1978) says that,

> the differences between races, civilizations, and languages set the real boundaries between human beings, on which races, nations, and civilizations were constructed; it forced vision away from common, as well as plural, human

> realities like joy, suffering, political organization, forcing attention instead in the downward and backward direction of immutable origins. (p. 233)

William said he learned tolerance and patience as a teacher,

> *I learned to understand that people can't produce if they don't understand what you want them to produce. What the students likely learned from me was that we weren't in a Master/Servant relationship. We were equals in that they were there to learn and I was there to teach. We had a common goal. They also developed a work ethic. Traditionally, when it rained, you couldn't work in the garden so you went to sleep. I couldn't have students sleeping during the rainy season. They had to be alert. They also had to be in class every day and on time.*
>
> *Families play an important role in PNG culture which I think gave me a greater appreciation of mine. I grew to understand Pidgin as a real language, something of which I was at first sceptical. I have lost a great deal of my knowledge of the language because there are no pidgin speakers here. I think the students gained a greater appreciation of English as well. Each year we had the Summer Institute of Linguistics come to the college to work with our students for a month. One of the assignments was to write a folktale from their village in English and then translate it into their first language. All of the students insisted that I read and correct their English. This was based on the idea that if they got it right in English, they'd get it right in their own language.*

William said he believed that the impact of living in Papua New Guinea was long reaching and even today he spends a few minutes on the Internet looking for news. Sometimes, he said, he runs across a familiar name and smiles. He sent me an e-mail recently,

> Dear Sheila:
>
> For twenty years I have had plenty of stories to tell of my experience in PNG. No one has ever questioned me as closely as you have about my experiences. I have never had to reflect so much on what I did. This weekend thinking about PNG consumed a lot of my time and in the end I concluded, "(Bill), you got it right!"
>
> If I had a dollar for every time I heard an expatriate say, "These people can't be taught," I wouldn't be a part of your research as I would have so much money I'd be retired. One fellow used to drop into my office every day for a chat. He'd jump up after a time, announce that he had a class

and would depart with the refrain, "These students can't be taught." I knew differently and his statement bothered me so much that one day I blurted out, "Yes Carl, they can be taught. You just have to learn how to do it." Needless to say I didn't see him for a very long time. When next I did, he said that at first he had been badly hurt and then, after a time he realized I was right. He changed his attitude, he paid more attention to the students, he began to listen, slowed his approach to teaching in keeping with the language difficulties, took greater care in producing teaching material and he began to see a change in his students and the work they produced. He once said, – "I think some of the students like me."

I think I went to Papua New Guinea at a magical time. Self-government had recently been peacefully achieved. Independence was on the horizon. The old colonial guard was giving up their very lucrative positions to inspired, young people. The age of the "Masta" was over. Most of my students were being trained to replace expatriate staff, many of whom had many years of experience and considerable post secondary education. It was a daunting task. I was fortunate enough to work with a multinational staff whose ideas, beliefs and values differed. I was the only volunteer that the students appreciated, and some expatriate staff ridiculed. We became a cohesive force.

Every November the recruiting process was carried out. There was a hierarchy in the recruitment process. Universities were given first choice followed by our Library Studies program. Other tertiary institutions followed with (get this) teacher's colleges coming at the bottom of the list. The Education Department notified our students of their acceptance. We immediately followed up with a chatty letter of welcome telling them what they could expect over the next two years and asking them to notify us when they would be arriving in Port Moresby so that we could pick them up at the airport. No other department did this. We established trust very early. Members of faculty in other parts of the college frequently accused us of being paternalistic. So be it! Our absentee and drop out rate was virtually nil. Working in a developing country with a multinational staff was the opportunity of a life-time. My world-views changed along with values and beliefs. I believe that I became more open minded, accepting, and less critical of things I didn't understand.

Chapter Five

Exploring Mary's Landscape of Ethnicity

Narrative Beginnings

Introduction

When I embarked on this research study, Mary eagerly agreed to participate because of her interest in issues around race and culture. Our conversations over several months deepened our mutual understanding of race, ethnicity, and culture. I believed Mary to be third generation Canadian. She perceived herself as Scottish. We wondered if this meant the same thing. We then wondered about the constructs of ethnicity and white mainstream culture. Mary frequently used the phrase "mainstream culture" and together we thought about what she meant by that.

I understood "mainstream" to mean white Anglo-Saxon Protestant. I believed celebrations such as Christmas and Easter earmarked traditional Christian values of the mainstream culture. Mary's adult definition of "mainstream" meant "being white, speaking English, adhering to Protestant Christian values, and being gainfully employed." These were her key points of who was included in "mainstream" and who was excluded. Mary remarked how her adult definition of "mainstream" started early in her life through her mother's understanding of what it meant. Mary said she learned to exclude certain ethnic groups based on religion and origin.

I wondered where she located her Highlander culture. She told me she learned from her father and his family that the Highland culture was not mainstream. Mary spoke of how the British, historically, endeavoured to end the Highlanders' knowledge of Gaelic culture and language because they considered the Highland culture barbaric. Mary noted "mainstream" culture seemed to permeate through much of her childhood memories in spite of her childhood experiences with Highland culture. Frankenberg (1993) notes white culture, despite being "a seemingly formless entity," has "a great deal of power, (and is) difficult to dislodge from its place in white consciousness as a point of reference for the measuring of others. Whiteness served simultaneously to eclipse and marginalize others (two modes of making the other inessential)" (pp. 197-198). I told Mary I believed my Ojibway culture was eclipsed by "white mainstream" culture. Upon reflection, she felt her Highland culture was also eclipsed by "mainstream" culture through her education and her mother's belief that knowledge of "mainstream" culture would guarantee Mary privilege in Canadian mainstream culture.

Beginnings

Scottish ancestors

Mary believes everyone who is Scottish is a genealogist. She said she cannot trace every family relative past her parents and grandparents but many of her relatives have old genealogical records dating to ancient times. It was emphasized as she was growing up that her ancestors on both sides of the family came straight out of Scotland in the late 1800s and settled in Cape Breton Island. At this time, Mary commented, there were no Lowland Scots living in the area where her ancestors lived. She said her great grandparents considered themselves "pure" Scots, meaning that they could trace their lineage to a Celtic ancestral root. Mary's parents belonged to the MacM. clan.

According to MacLean (1995) this particular clan, who could be traced to the thirteenth century, established their Highlander clanship and estate through marriage to a MacNeil heiress (p. 262).

Her father

Her father, Ian, who was born in New Brunswick, was raised by his maternal grandparents. His father, William, disowned him at birth because he was born with a harelip. When Ian was five years old, William, who had a change of heart, took him from his wife's parents and brought him back to Cape Breton Island to live with them. Mary mentioned that her father underwent two surgeries to repair this disfigurement. During the course of the research study, Mary showed me several family photos. In one photo her father, who appeared a handsome man, had only a faint scar on his upper lip. Mary commented,

> *Dad's father eventually accepted him but it was never a close relationship. William was an extremely handsome "ladies man" - my grandmother had a hard time of it. William valued beauty. Dad's younger brother had white blonde hair, rosy cheeks, and was very handsome while Dad had taffy coloured hair and was scarred.*

Ian grew up in an area comprised of mostly Highlanders who still spoke the Gaelic tongue and practiced many of its customs. Mary commented how much her father loved Scotland. He visited there before he died to see his "roots." He was two generations removed from Scotland but it was still "home," she recalled him saying. Her father was educated in Cape Breton Island and eventually became employed with the Department of Fisheries as its superintendent of salmon production. Mary described her father as compassionate and intelligent. She said she remembered how her father used to chase deer from their home as a way of keeping them from being shot by neighbours. This compassion extended also to his treatment of people. She remembered how her father made a point of employing people from all over the Island, not caring what their cultural, ethnic, or racial background was. If he felt there was a man who was in need then that's the one he hired over someone who had money. Mary said that her father hired some "Frenchmen" and that was unheard of in the area she grew up in. However, it didn't add to her family's popularity among the Scottish clans.

Her mother

Mary said that her mother was born in East St. John, New Brunswick, a member of the small MacM. Highland clan. Mary said that the MacM. clan were geographically located near the border of the Lowland Scots who were perceived by the Highlanders to sympathize with the British during the Jacobite rebellion. This suspicion was transmitted through generations and carried over to descendants in Cape Breton Island.

Mary said her mother, Ruth, was raised to be very much a "gentlewoman" which was upper middle class. Mary related how her grandparents, who were wealthy, spent much of their money on medical bills for their daughter, Ruth's sister. However, she eventually died from cancer despite all the various treatments. Mary's grandmother married an engineer whom Mary came to call Grampee. Ruth was raised in an exclusively white community in New Brunswick. Mary remembered her mother as kind and compassionate but an individual in her own right. She didn't seem to care if she shocked her Scottish neighbours because she believed they were too traditional and not keeping up to the times. She remembers her mother talking about this event when she first moved to Cape Breton Island:

> *When she was first married she just outraged the whole village. The neighbours were just scandalized. She decided that her living room with this big fireplace needed redecorating. She painted one wall a hot teal colour and the other three walls eggshell. It was totally unheard of. People would come in and look at it and say, "Interesting." And walk out and say, "Did you see what Ruth did? There is sheepskin on her floor."*

Mary said she believed this action on her mother's part ostracized the family from the clans in Cape Breton Island.

Mary's childhood

Mary told me she was born April 9th on Easter Sunday in St. John's, New Brunswick. Mary had an older brother and sister who were thirteen and eleven years older than she was. Mary believed she was an afterthought because of this age difference but in her later childhood she began to realize that she was the centre of her middle-aged parents' life. On the surface, it appeared that Mary enjoyed a safe and happy childhood with her parents but much of her recollection centred on her solitary experiences while she lived at home. What may have allowed for more interaction with Scottish children was denied by her mother. One of the events that Mary really wanted to belong to was the Highland dancing and the caleigh, for a lot of Scottish children were there.

> *I remember telling my mom that I really wanted to be a dancer. I wanted to learn how to do this and she wasn't impressed at all. She felt very much of an outsider there and wanted me to concentrate more on the outside world rather than the community. And to me the community was where my friends were and*

> *it was awkward because I always felt that I had to kind of be one person with my friends and one person with my mom.*
>
> *My dad loved music and any chance he got you know he would go and have a marvellous time. He loved to dance but my mom had two left feet. I could talk to dad about things and he managed to get me to where the caleigh was and mom would be horrified.*

Mary, who loved her mother dearly, said she felt she was betraying her mother when she would go to the caleigh or partake of Highland traditions. She was in a constant internal battle trying to sort out her feelings. She wanted to please her mother in following mainstream cultural values, but at the same time, she wanted to please her father in learning Highland customs.

Present day Mary

When Mary completed high school she worked at various clerical jobs in New Brunswick and met her husband who was working as a plumber there. She explained how she shared a joke with him after they married,

> *It's ironic because the area from where my husband's family descended from would have been beside where we were in Scotland. Apparently they raided each other periodically. Donald's family is MacF. and there is an old tale told that whenever there is a full moon they would call it MacF.'s lantern because that's when they went raiding. So I would tease him about coming from a clan of outlaws* (with laughter).

Mary and her husband went to the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton. She completed a degree in Art and History and made the Dean's list. Her husband encouraged her to go into special education rather than postgraduate studies so they both could travel the country together. She graduated with a second degree in education and her husband in vocational education. They began their teaching career in New Brunswick working with at-risk Malacite students. This was a short-term teaching position. While there, she learned a variety of crafts and more skills around basketry, quillwork, and beadwork. With no job prospects in view, they decided to go out of province.

Mary's experience with the Micmacs and their Malacite students was so positive that they decided to take teaching positions in northern communities with various tribal groups. Their first job outside of the province was in Yellowknife. They stayed one year before moving to an isolated Inuit community, Kugluktuk (Coppermine), N.W.T. on the Coronation Gulf as full-time teachers.

> *When we moved to the Arctic I was given an honorary name meaning "owl" and in that society it was a compliment because owls were considered intelligent and were respected. I loved the children in Kugluktuk.*

From there they migrated to more Southern teaching jobs taking on substitute or short-term teaching positions over a 2-year period, after which her husband applied to our school. A year later Mary was hired as a full-time C.T.S. (Career & Technology Studies) teacher. It is now Mary's sixth year. She is currently teaching our Grade 10 Integrated Occupational Program. Her expertise in the areas of fashion design, food studies, carpentry, and animal husbandry is a great asset to our school. As Mary and I became better acquainted through this study, we began to tease each other about the various terminology we learned about race and culture. One day, I pointed out what I noticed most about her. She is very tall and strongly-built with blond hair and light blue eyes. I laughingly told her she looked the epitome of a stereotypical Viking. She laughed and said the Vikings raided Scotland from time to time. In one of our conversations I asked her what kept her interested and involved in the school and she replied,

> *Wow! Is that ever a question and a half! I became very involved with the Cree culture and tried to find ways to link the traditional ways to new ways in a manner that was showing the assets of both.*

Her interest in their culture, in art, in mother nature themes, and Cree history allowed Mary to become acquainted with the Cree culture. She believed this helped her to understand and teach our Cree children better.

Tension #1 - Ethnicity

Introduction

Ethnicity as a construct is a slippery term. Yanow (2003) observes this "shifting of names and of membership over time and space suggests that race-ethnic categories *as they are used* have fungible boundaries" (p. 61). In this section, I focus on Mary's tensions around who gets to be marginalized. As a young girl, Mary learns to differentiate between white Protestant and white Catholic, between French and Irish, and between Micmac and Scot.

The Term and Construct of Ethnicity

According to Fox (2001), ethnicity is "a combination of cultural affinity, geographic roots, language, religion, sense of shared history, and sometimes, ascribed 'race'" (p. 20). Her definition supposes that a person's ethnicity is determined by his or her culture, where he or she came from, the language spoken, the religion practiced, and racial origin. More recent definitions of ethnicity separate race and ethnicity. Scupin (2003) notes "that in some cases ethnic groups may identify themselves by their physical appearances" but generally ethnicity refers to "observable culture and shared symbols of a particular group" such as language, religion, clothing, hairstyle, and food and also the "internal beliefs of the people regarding their shared ancestry" such as "shared origin" or "family ancestry" or "common homeland" (p. 68). Yanow (2003) shares a similar definition of ethnicity. She says that "shared history, language, religion, cuisine, customs, traditions, and so forth are commonly referred to as cultural traits. These are taken to be the hallmarks of ethnicity, commonly making a distinction between 'race' and 'ethnicity' on this basis" (p. 52).

Lived Experiences Around the Tension of Ethnicity

Thread #1: The English viewed as an ethnic group

Mary informed me about the importance of Scottish history to the clans in Cape Breton Island. She said her father would often discuss family history with her as if it happened only yesterday.

> *They brought all their baggage. All the old clan fights and everything. The feuds from the past stories and the superstitions all came.*

I began to understand that Mary's use of the word "baggage" in part referred to the yoke the Highlanders felt about British rule in Scotland. Newton (2000) explains there was an "explicit ideology of civilizing the Gaels by exterminating their language and replacing it with English through school education. . ." (p. 61). The Highlanders resisted this encroachment by the British with rebellion. In each case, however, they met defeat. The history of defeat did not destroy their belief in independence. Mary remembered her father telling her that the Scots in Cape Breton often reminded each other of British rule.

> *In an attempt to prevent another uprising, hundreds of Jacobites were sent to the plantations, some leaders executed, and lands confiscated. Some escaped abroad . . .most remained in hiding or under false colours waiting for the Rising to come again. Many Cape Breton songs still tell tales of the Rising with words that it will come again.*

Mary learned as a child that the Scots considered themselves unique with their own culture, history, and blood lines. She said she began to understand that her family, representative of most of the Highland clans, believed that any non-Scot was "ethnic." This meant even the English were considered ethnic. I wondered if "British" and "English" meant the same thing. Mary commented that to her they were interchangeable but that the word "British" meant the British Isles and included the Scots. The Highlanders, she noted, would never call themselves British. Mary's map of who gets to be included and excluded started early in her life. Mary was told stories by her father and his family about the English. Ruth believed that the clans should have left their ancient grudges behind in Scotland when they started a new life in Canada. Ian and his family disagreed. Mary was caught in the middle. As a young child she was drawn to the history of the Jacobites. Mary comments,

> *I just knew from stories told me you couldn't trust the English. And border clans for certain were looked down upon a little bit. You're not too sure you could trust them too. They often had a lot to do with the English. And a lot was still a carry over of bad feelings against England from the Highland clearances. My mom's family was really more of a border clan than my dad's family would have been.*

Her father's clan was accepted much more than her mother's in Cape Breton because of this history. Mary said her mother, who enjoyed the life of a "gentlewoman," was a perceived reflection of an English identity, even though she belonged to a Highland clan. Mary's father viewed the English as another ethnic group. Hall (1997) supports this view when he suggests the English are "a very interesting ethnic group, just hovering off the edge of Europe, with their own language, their own peculiar customs, their rituals, their myths" (p. 21). Mary today still believes the English are an ethnic group.

Thread #2: The problem with the Irish Catholics

Mary said she felt much tension about who were included in the clans. Mary began to realize when she went to school that the clans looked down on anyone who wasn't Highlander. It seemed to her that each year brought a different form of education about who was excluded: British-Protestant, right colour and religion, wrong history; Irish/French-Catholic, right colour, wrong history and religion; Micmac-Catholics, wrong colour and religion, right history; Black people, wrong colour. Mary said there were groups of Irish-Catholic and French-Catholic living around her area. She did not have much association with the French children because they went to a separate school. The Irish parents could not afford vehicles so their children went to the same school as Mary.

Mary's first experience with an Irish-Catholic was an incident that occurred when she was in Grade 3. She was only seven years old. Mary mentioned Irish Road was a slum area filled with poor, run-down houses. Mary shared a story about being kissed by an Irish-Catholic boy, Michael, and being quite excited about it,

> *In our area everybody was Scottish except there was one road called Irish Town Road. There were about maybe eight houses on it and the people were of Irish descent. One of the boys, Michael, was in my Grade 3 class and we*

> *were playing tag. I was running to get away from him when he caught me. He gave me this big smack on the mouth. Then he ran for all he was worth and I am just sitting just standing there saying, "Wow! Wow! What happened?"*
>
> *My family didn't despise Catholics. Just so long as I didn't marry one. You were looked down if you weren't Scottish and heaven help you if you were Catholic.*

Mary commented how it upset her parents. Her mother wondered about the life of poverty that would doom her child, while her father repeated a story passed on to him by his grandparents. Mary said that this story was passed down in order to remind Highlander children that the Irish were historically different.

> *Our family was the victim of the Irish (*with laughter*). We decided - this was my forefathers - they decided to, highly religious people - we were going to Ireland to convert the heathens from Catholicism. They were there and they got chased out. You know how you put your wool out on the lawn at night and then the morning dew brings them out all nice and white and bright. They went out one morning and blood had been poured all over everything and that was their sign to get out or you die. They very courageously got out and caught the next boat back. So it's been totally engrained in our family that Irish were heathens.*

I remembered hearing about the term "beyond the pale" and wondered what it meant. Walter (2001) notes the term was first used by the British to describe those who had lived beyond their stronghold of Dublin in 1488. Those who lived "beyond the pale" came to be associated with "pollution, dirt and impurity" (p. 22). This stereotypical image of the Irish, religious differences and historical detail kept Mary and Michael apart from that point on. Mary said she felt much tension because she still liked him and wanted to be his friend.

Thread #3: Mary's experience with a Micmac friend

Mary said she experienced much tension in being alone all the time as a pre-adolescent. Her parents gave her a bicycle so that she could visit her friends but she no longer felt comfortable playing with them. Mary said her first experience with the Micmacs from the reserve on Bras d'Or Lakes was during their annual trip to the Scottish area with their hand-made baskets. These were high in demand by the Highland women, including her mother. I asked Mary if the Micmacs were marginalized by the Highlanders. She didn't think so. She understood from her father that the Micmacs shared a similar history of colonization as the Highlanders. Many of them, because of their red or blonde hair, blended in. So when Claude came into her life one day she discovered a way out of her solitary life. Claude had a long, narrow face, was at least six feet tall, slim-built, and olive-complexioned. What she noticed was his lack of facial hair unlike the Scottish men she knew. Other than that, Claude could have passed for some French or Irish. Her refuge became the woods with Claude. For Mary it was a connection to her grandfather, a way of finding out about Nature and avoiding tension at home.

> *I had known the friendship of Claude, a Micmac man, and indirectly his family. He shared stories and legends with me including ones about birds and animals. He even taught me how to do a bit of birch bark work and some basketry. I was quite proud of my efforts. I would see this one guy in the summer and that was dad's friend. I liked him and he gave me lots of nice ideas. I spent so much of my time in the woods. That's where I played and usually I was by myself. He showed me one time how to make a basket so when I was berry picking I'd have a basket. It was a beautiful berry carrier and I'd also use that to collect things like flowers and stuff. He even taught me how to skin out small animals and birds. My mom wanted to dress me up in*

> *little party dresses and send me off places and I wasn't a little girlie-girlie. I was a tomboy from the toenails up and I'm sure it was very frustrating for her.*

I wondered how well her mother accepted a relationship with an older man who was Micmac. Mary replied she did have tensions around this friendship because her mother did not support her tomboy attitude, although it meant that Mary was not getting into trouble in the house. While Mary did not experience racial tension, she did experience cultural tension. Her mother did not support the wood lore knowledge that Claude was sharing with her daughter. Mary learned to keep silent about a lot of things she learned. The tension of silence around Highland customs, aboriginal ideology and mainstream culture was a burden. Despite this anxiety, Mary continued to see Claude in the summer with her father's blessing. Claude would often take the time to show Mary what he learned as a young boy. It became a mutual task of teaching and learning Micmac customs.

Thread # 4: Mary's first experience with colour as an issue

Mary told me this story about being friendly with an African-Canadian man. She said Tony McLeod was a handsome man whose grandfather was Irish. She brought him home to meet her parents, unannounced.

> *I brought home a black boyfriend one time and I just thought he was a real nice guy. I had been raised that colour was an insignificant thing. I liked him and so I brought him home and dad just sort of set back a little bit and mom was almost speechless for a while. They were both extremely polite but on edge. They would not relax. Maybe if I warned them. I didn't think to warn them because I didn't think of it. But they were quite shocked. My brother's wife has a niece who married a black man and her family just sort of basically - she is not disowned - but, she is definitely on the outskirts.*

Mary could not understand her parent's reaction. She said she believed Tony was as "mainstream" as she was. Although Mary never questioned her parents, she knew by their silence they disapproved of the relationship. Once her parents calmed down, Mary's mother asked Tony to stay for dinner. However, her parents were further shocked when they discovered that Tony's last name was McLeod and his grandfather was Irish. Mary commented how badly the evening went. I wondered if Mary would be allowed to marry someone who was non-white. She said her parents would have eventually agreed if he was Baptist. Mary knew she would be crossing serious boundaries with her relatives if she were to marry an African, an Irishman, or a Catholic. She related how she was first married to an Elvis type, dark and good looking, who was part English. Mary's father did not approve of this marriage. Her turbulent and abusive marriage lasted only two years, two months, and two days, she said. Then she met Donald who was a Highlander and who reminded her of her father. I asked Mary if she would allow her two grown-up daughters to marry someone who was racially different. She replied emphatically, "Of course!"

Tension #2: Ethnicity and Culture

Introduction

Her mother's perception that mainstream was preferable to Highlander culture precipitated Mary's marginalization by the Scots who still practiced their ancient customs and language in Cape Breton Island. Mary said she marginalized the Irish and French children. Her playmates were Highland children and her mother's attitude towards Highland culture further removed her from having playmates. She continued to have some friends but as she got older began to realize how different she was becoming from her Highlander friends. Mary's mother considered Highland culture with its language and customs embedded within ancient Celtic roots to be non-Christian and non-mainstream.

Thread #1: Conflict over the Gaelic language

I wondered how Mary's father felt about learning English as his first language. Mary suggested it was important for her father to learn English in order to obtain employment. Her father pointed out his observations of those Highlander children he grew up with who ended up in low-paying jobs because they couldn't speak English fluently enough. Frankenberg (1993) states, colonization "occasioned the reformulation of European selves. Central to colonial discourses is the notion of the colonized subject as irreducibly Other from the standpoint of a white 'self'" (pp. 16-17). Mary's father, in order to survive, had to locate his Gaelic language to the background. It became the Other of himself. He reconciled this disparity by still participating in Highland culture and striving to keep it alive in his children.

I wondered how her father felt about her and her siblings learning English, the colonizer's language, as their first language. I also wondered if Mary felt at some point more English than Scottish because she learned English as her first language and adopted many of the cultural earmarks of Canadian mainstream culture. She remarked she had to learn English but did not want to. She wanted to speak Gaelic fluently with a passion but there wasn't anyone to teach her, for her father only knew phrases intertwined with English. Her mother did not speak Gaelic at all. Mary said she saw her chance at grasping Highland culture evaporating with each passing year. The tension was increased with her awareness that it was impossible to discuss this difficulty without upsetting her mother. It wasn't until she was an adult that she began to realize how much she absorbed. She commented the Gaelic language was an "undercurrent running through her consciousness."

Thread # 2: Conflict over Highlander culture

Mary located the Highland culture as different from Canadian mainstream culture. Mary said she first recognized her marginalization by the Scottish families when she was about nine years old. Halloween did not seem important in her family household but when Mary was not invited to a party that was being celebrated within one of the clans, her mother decided to create a Halloween party for her. Some of her friends never celebrated Halloween and were eager to find out what it was all about. Mary's mother decorated the basement with ghosts in corners, witches with brooms up on the walls, tubs of water with apples bobbing within them, and strings of apples hanging from the ceiling.

> *My mom made up all these different games and a little haunted house down there and it was the first time I never seen anything like that and everybody had a marvellous time. There were apples in the water. There was one girl, Martha, who was so fascinated by it that she would put her hands behind her back and go for the apple. When she couldn't catch it, she would stick her whole head and shoulders to get it up.*

Mary said that having this Halloween party gave her a sense of relief but it did not resolve her tension of not being invited to a clan's celebrations. Mary's mother provided a party to ease the pain of rejection and in doing so gave her a sense of belonging to mainstream culture. Mary remembered several situations that she felt would have made her feel more in tune with her Highland culture but were cut short by her mother's determination to erase this link to her ancestral past,

> *In my house there were certain things that mom would not permit; for example, you didn't wear Jacobite jewellery. At one point I had a Jacobite brooch given to me by my father's brother George (to hold a tartan) and she held it in her hand and looked at it for a long time before I was allowed to keep it - but she could never bring herself to say that it was beautiful or even pretty. My grandfather (Dad's dad) gave me a tartan bowtie to wear with a "dress-up" red skirt and white blouse at a school concert. Mom fussed but said I could wear it so as not to hurt his feelings but it disappeared shortly after that.*

Mary's mother's refusal to allow her daughter to participate and be more actively involved with her Highland culture created much tension for her. This transmission of knowledge from her father's family was not to keep Mary from mainstream but to instil in her the appreciation of her Gaelic heritage. Hall and Barongan (2002) say that such a situation illustrates "a social psychological sense of peoplehood in which members of a group share a unique social and cultural heritage that is transmitted from one generation to another" (p. 17). Mary's fear grew each day as she began to believe she would not be able to transmit much of the Highland culture to her own children.

Tension #3 - The Narrative Self

Introduction

Mary commented she carried these childhood memories set within feelings of ambivalence and tension over not fully knowing her Highland culture and the disruption in her ancestral history that caused her not knowing. She said she felt dislocated from Scotland and its past because she did not have the links of language and customs. At times she questioned her own authenticity as a Highlander. At other times, she would feel troubled when people would note her accent and wonder where it came from. Mary said her location as mainstream and Highlander seemed "weird" at times. It was like she was hiding another person inside herself. She wanted to yell out to others that she had a Gaelic part and why couldn't anyone see it. She said all anyone seemed to see was a "white" face and assumed she was "white and mainstream." Her feelings were so confused but she felt silenced.

Lived Experiences Around the Narrative Self

Thread #1: Mary identifies with her father and Grampee

Mary said she experienced a close encounter when she was four years old. After her cousin left for the summer, Mary said she decided to mimic her cousin's antics on the walkway over the salmon pond. As she was hanging under the walkway, her arms gave way and she found herself trapped underwater against the grate. Someone saw her fall and immediately her father jumped in.

> *I was so embarrassed that I cried but dad just kind of got me up on my feet and took me up to the house with his arm wrapped around me. I remember being so horrified because he got his good shoes and suit all wet rescuing me.*

This event was a pivotal one for Mary because she saw in her father a hero. Witherell (1991) says that within a relationship both subject and object are "joined in an irreducible mutuality of growth and meaning" (p. 86). For Mary this relationship with her father grew stronger over the years. His immersion in Gaelic culture provided a means for Mary to develop a close bond with him. There were some things that her mother, from her own upbringing, couldn't totally erase from her own home and Mary's upbringing,

> *I grew up fully believing in ghosts, ghosties, and things that went bump in the night. There were a lot of little customs that you followed that were very different from Canadian mainstream.*

These customs remain embedded within Mary to this day. Mary said her maternal grandfather whom she called "Grampee" was very special in her life. Although he wasn't closely connected to his Gaelic roots, he did take Mary for nature walks instructing her in wood lore. She said one day he captured a butterfly in his hat so that she could study it and then he showed her how to release it. This relationship ended upon his death when she was six years of age. Witherell (1991) state that one's self is defined by the "collective norms, mores, values, prejudices, and preconceptions that have evolved over time and are sustained with minimal consciousness" and "our relations with other persons" (p. 85). This relationship with nature through her Grampee was also discovered with Claude. I asked Mary if she felt, as a child, some connection to her Celtic roots in her time spent with Claude. She said the Mother Nature themes were a recurring image in Celtic culture and carried over to the Highlands. I wondered about the similarity to North American Indian world-views. Mary and I shared laughingly on the meaning of "synchronous time" for all of our community meetings were held on "Indian time." I wondered if her mother ever saw a connection to the Gaelic root through Claude. Mary commented her mother suspected that she was learning more than basket-weaving but could not prove it. Mary remembered these moments with her Grampee and Claude as an ambivalent time of her life - the desire to be with her mother and the desire to be a Highlander.

Thread #2: Marginalization through clan gatherings/colours

Mary discussed how, as she was entering adolescence, she was increasingly distant from her Scottish friends and their parents. Her increasing age became a problem for the knowledge that she should have had, like her Scottish girlfriends, was quickly vanishing. Pressured by her mother, she decided to take her mother's designed path.

> *If you went to a party where there was a group gathering and if the house got too full the ones that did not belong got turked out. I can remember very well standing outside with a couple of other kids looking in while everybody else was having a good time in there. They would say, "Too full. You gotta go." When you would go to different events that were happening people would dress in the clan colours. When I first went there I wasn't used to that. Dad's clan is a set of MacM's so that was the clan's colour. My mom's was from a different branch but also MacM. So I would say that was my tartan. That's what I would go for and we very few in that particular area belonging to that clan. Not only was I an outsider but I was also outside from the Scottish angle too because I was the wrong clan and so it was kind of bizarre.*

This created much tension for her because she couldn't share with her parents how much she wanted to be both mainstream and Highlander. Increased tension between her father and her mother over Mary's cultural location and marginalization by the Scottish clans drove Mary to become more solitary. She was walking a fine line with everyone, Mary remembered. Mary said she felt tension growing up around Cape Breton because mainstream people located her as a Highlander but Highlanders located her mainstream.

> *I was the oddball out because I hadn't been born there. If I was to be included into anything I had to do better than everybody else in order to be part of it otherwise I just wasn't included. And where we lived we were far enough away that you know you could justify it by just saying that they just forgot to tell her or something.*

Thread #3: Mary discovers other Native groups

Mary's experience with marginalization by the Scottish clans and self-imposed marginalization with the Irish and the French forced her to find a fit elsewhere. She decided that her experience with Claude was the door for such a location. She later thought she found a fit with the Inuit people. She hoped the Inuit people would be willing to enter into what Shabatay (1991) calls "a dialogical relationship" with her and her family so that both sides could experience the "uniqueness of the other" (p. 136). This occurred on a general level with most of the Inuit people except for one man who was abusive to her children. Mary said she realized that she fell into the trap of stereotyping. This situation caused her grief but also permitted her to recognize each person individually from that point on.

Mary said when she was first hired at our school she was sensitive to stereotyping. She was amazed at how white and Native staff members easily made racial and ethnic jokes or comments. For example, she said she heard one Native teacher making fun of

Ojibways. She wondered if I knew about this. I was aware of that particular individual who despised Ojibways for historical reasons. I shared with her it was not uncommon for other Native groups to categorize each other. For example, I heard stories about how the Blackfoot people despised the Plains Cree. That shocked Mary. I then queried about her marginalization by the Cree people, in particular her students. She explained,

> *Being a Scot has never been brought up except to occasionally repeat or spell a word because of my "weird accent." I think it could just as well be Japanese. It was regarded as a funny "white" thing. To the kids, I am not Scottish, English, Danish or Dutch. I am just white. Most of them are prepared to overlook this inconvenience and occasionally some try to think of ways I can get around this difficulty. Once my entire class of Grade 9s tried to figure out if there was any way they could convince the band I was really Indian so that I could collect oil money. I love it!!!*

Mary said that this acceptance by the students made her feel part of the Cree culture and reminded her of her experience with Claude, the Micmac man she met as a child. However, the interactions with the parents and elders in the community was a different story. She said at times she was referred to as a "mooniyah" meaning "whiteman" and "Other." Mary said when she first came to our school she had a bit of struggle because she believed she was well-versed in Native culture. She had much experience with the Micmacs in Cape Breton Island and worked with the Inuits in Coppermine. She said,

> *When I first came to a Cree society it was a bit of a shock. I was informed that I was not to touch feathers (only men can); basketry was somewhat frowned upon and not to be taught to students, weaving was also inappropriate. I should be working with hides that, incidentally, I would have to supply on my own.*

Mary said she felt confused about Cree protocol. She learned to step back and not assume that what she learned from the Micmacs was the same as the Crees. Her students were sympathetic towards her because she treated them lovingly, but the Cree adults did not share this same attitude. The other problem that Mary had to deal with was the lack of information about Cree culture. More and more elders were taking Cree history and cultural knowledge with them to the grave. Mary said she didn't know where to turn. Mary reiterates this difficulty:

> *I hate to be told I can't do something. Trying to meet cultural expectations can be difficult because often the expectations differ from elder to elder. I brought in some ducks from home one time to show the kids a 'traditional' treat. They were already plucked and gutted. We made a duck soup and an elder stopped in and tried it. She ate three helpings with bannock and then said it was "no good." When I worked in Home Economics it was much the same. Elders complained if we made any baby clothing or moss bags because it would encourage promiscuity. We made full-sized tipis but were told we couldn't teach that. The elder said, "I didn't learn how to make a tipi until I was forty years old so these kids should wait too." On the other hand, some parents and elders were happy to help. One day when my assignment for the students was to interview and collect traditional recipes from the elders, one old lady sent me a terrific recipe for lemon meringue pie.*

When Mary mentioned that she was making moss bags, I wondered at the risk she was taking because her former counterpart was reprimanded for doing this exact thing. I supposed that Mary's eager interest in Cree culture, her cooperation, and her "accent" won her the respect of some of the elders. It was becoming apparent that Mary didn't quite fit "white" mainstream and I believe many community members and the board recognized this. They were more willing to forgive Mary for her intrusions on their cultural boundaries.

Kerby (1991) says, "When we ask of someone who they are, this question generally comes down to a recounting of their passage through time, their autobiography or self-narrative" (p. 15). Mary's narrative self is wrapped around the values of the Gaelic culture and mainstream society. Mary believed there were many similarities between Gaelic and aboriginal cultures regarding the viewpoint about nature that she felt comfortable in displaying what she learned about Inuit culture at our Multicultural Day event. For Mary, culture meant something one learned. Her own tensions around ethnicity and culture as a child and where she belonged permitted her to seek a space, a middle space, to negotiate these tensions. Mary began to realize that her Gaelic part lies underneath her mainstream exterior driving an interest in seeing a mirror image of her own heritage through the looking glass of Native cultural traditions. The insights gained from her childhood experiences of being marginalized allowed her to translate these feelings of hurt into ones of compassion towards others. She believed that rather than gazing upon the Other, one should see the Other as an individual in all of its multiplicity. It is the "multi-cultural" aspect from the negotiation of cultures that permits understanding between ethnic groups. Mary commented she believes she carries some of the Highland culture within her to this day. She also pointed out she believes she has been enriched from her knowledge of Micmac, Inuit, and Cree cultures. She said, "I love it!"

Chapter Six

Exploring Beth's Postcolonial Landscape

Narrative Beginnings

Introduction

When I began this research study, Beth's story came to mind. She had known John, an Inuit, for twenty years and has been married to him for fifteen years. They have three children. When we began our conversations, Beth described herself as a "Heinz 57." She explained this term meant someone who could not be categorized by one distinguishable ethnic or racial feature. She said her ancestral tree consisted of many ethnic groups such as Swedish, Irish, English, Scottish, and Metis. She is pretty, vibrant with blue eyes, and a "peaches and cream" complexion. I wondered about her lived experiences before and after she married John. I wondered about the kinds of tensions she faced around race and culture.

Beginnings

Beth's family background

Beth said she has knowledge of her family tree only back to her great grandparents. Her paternal great-grandfather, George, was a Metis and her great-grandmother, Irene, may have been Metis too. Both lived in Quebec and moved westward settling in the area around Edmonton in the early 1900s. Their son, Harold, Beth's paternal grandfather, married a Metis woman, Linda. Beth said her father, James, looked Native. Beth's paternal grandfather, Harold, died when she was very young.

However, she knew her paternal grandmother, Linda, very well. Beth commented that genealogy on this side of the family was a little secretive.

James married Karen whose ancestry was "white." Karen's great-grandparents came to Canada in the late 1800s and settled in the Wetaskiwin area. Her great-grandparents were Swedish. Their son, Beth's grandfather, married an English woman who was raised in Edmonton. Karen's family completed an extensive genealogy. In our early conversations, Beth shared how insignificant she once believed family genealogy was until she began to research her father's family tree during this study. At the start of our conversations two years ago, she commented,

> *There was a family tree that my paternal grandmother, Linda, put together and it sort of gave a better outline. I have never sat down and looked at that family tree. I am not sure why some people are interested in their family background. I haven't really got to the point where I want to find out more.*

Today, Beth shared how she was now just beginning to see the value of knowing her family tree. Family history gave her location, a sense of belonging. She said at one time she believed her father's family had a history of drinking and did not want to "dig." Her recent research has revealed her father's side of the family had actually led "pretty interesting lives." Beth noted this discovery became important for her feeling connected to her Metis side.

Beth's parents

James and Karen were born in Alberta. Beth related how her father was a heavy-duty mechanic and a talented welder much in demand by industrial companies. While

James financially provided for his family, Beth said, he was unable to provide them with his time and affection. Her father's inability to show his love towards her left a vacuum in her life. He died at the age of 54.

Beth said her mother married at age 16. Jane had all four of her children by the age of 20. Beth considered her mother, who was raised in the Wetaskiwin area, to be a naive farm girl who fell in love with this "James Dean" type. Beth shared that, while her mother loved James, she wanted to leave him because of his abusive nature when he drank. Since Karen did not finish high school she found it difficult to find employment that would enable her to support four children on her own. I asked Beth to describe for me what she remembered of her parents when she was growing up. She said,

> *They worked hard. They were trying to put food on the table. They were so busy in their days. My Mom was a good stay at home parent. My Dad was a good provider but he really didn't connect with his kids. He didn't know how to. He was never able to connect with his own parents.*

Beth related that she had happy memories of her childhood. To this day, she has a loving relationship with her mother. She remembered her mother as one who loved her children and supported them at home and at school. Beth blamed her father's inability to show affection on his own upbringing. When her father was at home, Beth said she often played outside. She would go into the woods with her dog. She created a fantasy world of the Arctic that she called "No Man's Land." There, she transformed herself into a "woman of the land" fighting blizzards or riding the ice floes with her only companion, her dog.

> *I was in the Arctic tundra and braving the elements. I would be off on some journey walking across the snow. My dog and I were out in the field just walking and I was just totally in my own little world out on my adventure in the snow. I would be going into No Man's Land. I would have to survive somehow, just me and my dog.*

Present Day

Beth described her racial and cultural location as white mainstream. I asked her what she meant by this. She explained "white mainstream" meant being able to adapt and conform to what was socially acceptable by the majority of people. She noted "white mainstream" meant the dominant culture. She commented that, "the key element to mainstream culture is the language." The role of education, she believes, is to facilitate the learning of English through a mandated curriculum in which the views were generally representative of an English culture of English-speaking Canadians.

I wondered how her Metis heritage fitted in with her view of herself as white mainstream. She said Metis was an amalgamation of various and many different ethnic and racial groups. She believed that the definition of Metis was as nebulous as that of "white mainstream." She said while growing up "Metis" was not a location of political or social status. It meant that somewhere in her ancestral tree there were Native roots but over time with more "white" mixing these roots became less physically noticeable. It was only when she was 28 years of age that she really looked into the meaning of Metis when friends of her husband told her that she didn't have to look "Native" to be Native. She discovered her father did not have a connection to his Metis roots because he was not taught. As a result, it never came up in her home when she was growing up. I wondered if Beth's maternal grandparents knew and were prejudiced towards her father. She said they did not know that James was Metis, even with his darker colouring.

Beth was born in Ponoka in 1965. Shortly afterwards, her family moved to Hinton. She began school at age six in Hinton. Her parents moved to Spruce Grove when she was ten years old. The year she entered Grade 7 the school district established a different boundary for schools. Students who lived closer to Enoch Reserve had to go to Kitaskinaw School. A year later her family moved to Beaumont where her father had a new job as a heavy-duty mechanic. Beth said she and her brothers took the bus to Leduc for schooling. She lived in Beaumont until she was 18.

Beth related how she met her husband. She said her husband was teaching courses on land and sea survival in Edmonton. She saw him at a hair salon one day and decided that he was the man for her and asked him for a date. She discovered that John spent some of his adult years in Calgary and Edmonton where he worked for Canadian Airlines. Beth believed that he had the best of both worlds: he was raised in his Inuit culture and spoke the language and yet was also conversant in English. Beth at one time teasingly called him a "white Eskimo." I asked Beth what were her parents' views on her marrying an Inuit. She said,

> *My family's views were pretty much unknown to me until I met John. Then, of course, all the views came pouring out. My parents grew up in the Wetaskiwin area. I think their points of view were a direct result of the local views at that time. This would be in the late 50s and early 60s. My mom's parents were good people but narrow minded as far as Native people were concerned. My grandfather was really upset when he found out about John. My feelings were very hurt. I think my relationship with John has opened the mind of all family members on Native people and issues. It's a good thing.*

When it was time for her future husband to return to the Arctic, Beth said she had made up her mind to go with him. She was still a student at the University of Alberta and did not have a lot of money. Beth had to make a decision:

> *I decided that I would go. I requested Inuvik for my teaching practicum. Can you imagine? I went to the faculty consultant and asked, "Can I do my practicum up north?" They said, "As long as you have a plane ticket." John bought me a plane ticket and I did my practicum in minus 40 degrees weather for three weeks. I loved it!*

Beth returned to Leduc and they got married in a tiny Anglican church. John was Anglican. Afterwards, Beth got a teaching job up in Inuvik. Although her two oldest children were born in Edmonton, Beth returned to the North with her newborns to be with John. The first two children were raised in Inuvik and were immersed in Inuit culture. They learned to appreciate the land and learned to speak Inuvialuktun. Beth considered her youngest, who was born in Prince George, B.C., to be less familiar with the Inuit culture because shortly afterwards she and her husband moved to Leduc. Her children are currently enrolled in a public school in Leduc. She said she and her husband are equipping their own children on how to deal with prejudice in their own lives:

> *My own children will experience more prejudice in their life but we are equipping them with the tools that they will need to rise above it and educate others.*

I was on the hiring committee when we were looking for candidates for a Grade 7 position. I looked through many applications. Beth received a degree in education from the University of Alberta with a major in English and a minor in Art. She had taken some Native Studies courses. When asked about her courses at a later date, she believed that everything she learned about Native issues was from living and working in Native communities, not from a book. What interested me more was the letter of reference she got from her principal. He said she was resilient. She was hired after a short interview in which she stressed her belief that teaching is a sacred task. She said that teaching gave her a life purpose and she is happiest doing that. She has a relationship with each child. She has been one of the Grade 7 teachers for five years,

> *I believe that this is the place I am supposed to be at this point in my teaching career. I believe I was meant to be here. I have always worked in the aboriginal community and this is where I feel that I can make the most difference.*

Tension #1- Race

Introduction

In this section, I wondered more about Beth's understanding of her "white" and "Metis" location. Beth discussed her lived childhood experience with the Cree children on Enoch reserve and how this particular experience became significant for her compassion for others who were visibly racially and culturally different. It was at Enoch that she became fully aware of the plight of First Nations people. Beth suggested that this may have contributed to the ease she felt in marrying an Inuit.

Lived Experiences Around the Tension of Race

Thread #1: Beth's understanding of "Heinz 57"

Beth said she had not experienced racial discrimination because of her fair colouring. She didn't know her father was Native until she was in her late twenties. She knew somewhere in her distant background there were Metis roots but she never regarded her father as Native in the political sense. I wondered what she thought "Metis" meant. I shared with Beth my understanding of the construct "Metis." I thought it to mean someone who was half-French and half-Indian. Beth believed that this definition of "Metis" did not apply to her father or to herself. She wondered if there weren't a little Native in most Canadians. Beth did not consider one's "Metis status" to apply to one's skin colour for she knew of many people who had some Native in their family history but it did not reveal itself in their skin colour. Beth said her father's Native roots never came up within her family. I wondered if her father did not want to acknowledge his roots. She said she could not answer that query because her father never brought it up.

> *I don't think my dad realized that he was Metis. He couldn't share this with anyone because it wasn't there for him. His family did not openly acknowledge their Native roots.*

I wondered when Beth first recognized racial tension. She shared with me her first awareness of racial discrimination was when she was six or seven years old when she heard disparaging comments about "visible minorities" from home and in the community. I thought it interesting her father was prejudiced against other non-white people. She said her father's own racial and cultural prejudices reflected the general feeling in the Wetaskiwin area toward Native people. Scheckel (1998) speaks of Native people presenting an image of what white culture is not or would not want. She says that Indians "constituted the boundaries at which the meaning of the nation is defined" (p. 9). I wonder if Beth's father believed if he made his Metis background known, especially to himself, he would have to deal with issues of disempowerment and marginalization. Beth commented she was never made aware that he may have felt some personal conflict. She said he portrayed himself as part of "white mainstream" culture. She said she proudly announced herself as Heinz 57 when people asked her about her ethnic background, never thinking about other people's constructions of the meaning of "Metis",

> *Oh, I can pretty much say I am a Canadian because I have some French, some Metis, some Swiss - I am a Heinz 57!!* (with laughter). *People would ask, "What's your ethnic background?" I would reply, "I am a Heinz 57, that's what I am. I've got Metis, English, Swedish, Irish, Scottish - just a mix!!!" My grandparents - one was English, one was Swedish. My other set of grandparents - one was Irish, one was Scottish. Some Metis on my side of the family.*

However, Beth said she felt tension from such a cultural and racial mix. "Mainstream" had little meaning for her because she did not understand what it was. She said she thought that while she had a little bit of everything this did not provide her with a distinct identity as a person. She said she felt confusion about her racial identity because the construct of whiteness meant a conglomeration of things. To her, whiteness meant ambivalence. Beth noted there did not seem to be any distinct cultural attribute that was clearly defined like the Inuit culture as she came to know it through her husband. White mainstream seemed to be so nebulous. I wondered what "white" meant to Beth. She thought it meant a convolution of so many things: mainstream, acceptable, invisible. Beth believes that "white mainstream" has its own barriers. Beth remarked that "white mainstream" includes anyone with "white" skin and does not focus on the uniqueness of an individual. The term "whiteness" puts everyone with white skin in the middle in a big mass.

Beth said moving up North was an escape for her. She did not have to deal with her family's difficulties. She had a chance to explore and live her life how she saw fit.

> *I always knew that I would end up living in a Native community even when I was about eleven or twelve. I always wanted to go to the North. It was like fate. It was destiny. I wanted to live on the land. I wanted to be a bush woman for awhile. It's funny because I think when I moved up north I went to No Man's Land. I remember the first time I went North, all the way to Inuvik, the plane was circling and getting ready to land I looked out the window. I remember saying to myself, "Where am I?" (*with laughter*). It was just like No Man's Land of my childhood - that's exactly what it was.*

Beth commented she felt tension around calling herself "white mainstream" after realizing what it meant. She began to realize that her long walks isolated her from other children and her parents. She was able to develop on her own without too much influence from anyone. This inner life allowed her to think independently of her parents and her relatives.

Thread #2: Enoch reserve

Beth said she went to Kitaskinaw School on Enoch Reserve when she was in Grade 7. She said it was the first integrated school in Alberta. She said that a different boundary line was drawn up for this "experiment." If you lived on the side closer to Enoch, then you had to go to their school. "The reserve had needed a school but did not have enough students to make establishment of their own school feasible" (Voyageur, 1992, p. 35.) Her parents did not show too much interest in what was happening to her or her brothers because she believes her parents at that time didn't understand the impact or consequences of such an experimental school. She said it was quite an experience,

> *The Native children didn't want us there. The first day we got off the bus there was a whole bunch of Indian kids lined up on the sidewalk to the door. They were calling us white trash. We were all white kids mixed in with these Indian kids who didn't want us there. However, I ended up having lots of friends by the*

> *end of the year. I even had kind of a boyfriend who lived on the reserve. I got along with everybody. I had a heyday.*

According to Beth, this was the part of her life that prepared her for working and living in the Native communities as an adult. In one glorious year, she said, she felt accepted by her Native classmates and shared a oneness with her new friends. She said it was at this time that she broke away from the white pool and "in the middle."

> *I did not see the differences the way other people do. They were individuals and they were unique and I was proud to be associated with the kids from Enoch. This experience opened my mind more than anything and I knew I would never ever look down on Native people. I found that they were just like me in many ways. There was dysfunction in the home and many of them struggled emotionally in order to deal with it. I could identify with them more than non-Native kids. I had no prejudices against Native people before I went to Enoch.*

Her opinions set her apart from white kids and put her on the margins like her Native friends. She didn't mind. Beth commented she wanted to make a stand for First Nations people after having friends from the reserve. She said that the only good outcome about moving away to Beaumont and from the reserve was that it set the stage for falling in love with John and having children of an even richer racial and cultural background.

Thread #3: Beth falls in love

Beth happened to be in a hair salon one day when she noticed this Inuit man getting his hair cut. She was nineteen years old and he was thirty-six. She said it was love at first sight. She enrolled in his course and they started dating.

> *I remember just thinking to myself you know that's him, that's him. I had nobody in life before my husband and he's been the only man. We ended up getting*

> *together later on in the evening and that was it. It didn't surprise anybody when I ended up with an Inuit man. I remember my brother saying, "Yeah. I really admire you. If you want something you just go and get it. You don't care what anybody thinks. You just go and get it." I never really considered myself like that but I guess I was never told I was an independent child.*

She said that her attraction to John was his fatherly attitude that she never got as a child. John was kind and he adored her. While growing up her own father did not provide as good a role model as he could have been although she loved her father for all the good things about him and what he tried to do for her family. Beth saw John as a place to start feeling "connected." Delpit (1995) speaks of the connectedness of the Alaskan people to nature and to each other. She says, "I was but one component of the world, connected to and no more important than all the other parts" (p. 91). The English language provided the initial means for Beth and John to meet and build a relationship. In time, he began to teach her words to explain what it was like to be connected to the land and to each other. From that point on she began to question the singleness of owning only one culture.

Thread #4: Facing racial discrimination

Beth talked about her Uncle Tony who was born in Italy. His parents moved to Canada after the Second World War, finally settling in Jasper where there was already a small Italian community. Beth said that her Uncle faced a lot of prejudices. She could not understand her Uncle's concern since he was a victim of racism himself. She remembered when she was pregnant with her first child her Uncle approached her and said,

> *Have you ever thought, you know, that John being Inuit and you being white what your children may have to go through when they get older? Your child is going to look different. And in school your child is - you know there's going to be prejudice. Have you ever thought about it?*

Beth said she felt very surprised by his remark. She knew prejudice existed but always felt that once a baby was on its way there would be joy. Instead she faced tension with the views expressed by her relatives. She said she expected she would have a difficult time getting John accepted but she believed her children would not have any problems. She said it created tension for her in realizing that her own family members were preparing her to face more racial discrimination. The move up North helped ease the family tensions. Beth said her parents realized she was leaving with John. She had chosen him over them. If they were going to be in their lives they would have to accept him.

What Beth found hurtful was being aware of the pain that her husband and children must feel when they are discriminated against because of their darker skin colouring. Beth's comment reminded me of Grumet (1988) who discusses mirror imaging of mother and child in which the child identifies with his or her own mother. She says that parenting "permits the ultimate reciprocity" (p. 116). However, for Beth this becomes problematic because she is white and her children are brown. Her children cannot mirror themselves with her as well as they can with their father because of skin colour. Beth says this is why it made more sense for them to be considered Inuit. Beth commented that she was glad the Inuit people and relatives totally accepted her children as Inuit.

She said she heard racial statements all the time from her own friends and family. Often they weren't even aware of what they were saying and what it sounded like to her. She suspected these people were not educated on Native issues and did not have her life experiences. She said she believed she and her husband are responsible for educating family members on what is happening in the Native community. At times, Beth commented she had to deal with subtle racism in public places,

> *I think that racial discrimination does exist for me in terms of people judging me because of my mixed marriage. We are a curiosity sometimes. I also indirectly feel discriminated against when my husband experiences discrimination and when my children do. I become so angry. I feel personally insulted and saddened as if it were me. I get asked all of the time about how I met my husband by staff members and other acquaintances. People are curious. I am perceived as white, but just being in the company of a Native person sometimes make you a target as well.*

In our conversations she speaks lovingly of him and how good he has been to her all these years. This loving relationship has helped her reduce the tension she feels when confronted with someone's remark about her children. For example, she remembered one time when she was in a grocery store the clerk mistakenly assumed that the Inuit-looking children standing beside her belonged to some other parent and showed surprise when she discovered they belonged to Beth. Beth said she then reached out to this clerk by sharing her pride in the Inuit culture and in her children.

Thread #5: Black roots in an Inuit community

Beth discovered that Inuit people had their own form of shame and prejudices. She remembered being curious about the dark, tightly-curled hair of some of her husband's relatives. Beth started asking questions and in her search discovered that there were black whalers that came up to the Arctic.

> *Inuit people hide their "coloured" roots as well because black whalers came up to the high Arctic. I heard those stories from my husband who heard those stories from a family member. We were looking at his family - his dad in particular - because if you look at his dad he's got curly, kinky hair. It was one of the little secrets. My husband has straight Eskimo hair but some of the family members have this curly kinky hair - yeah, okay - Eskimos with curly kinky hair????*

When Beth and I were talking about this, I wondered if John was a mix of Inuit and black. She said she believed he wasn't. His Auntie adopted him as a baby. Beth explained that if John had black roots they were not evident in the way he looked. I wondered why she searched out this fragment of his family tree. Beth said it was something that just came up as a matter of interest at the time. She wanted to share this because she began to understand for herself that prejudice is not confined only to white people. It was an issue she had to deal with when she worked at our school because she said she discovered that some of the parents and students would make racial remarks. She said she experienced tension working at our school in the first year she was here. She said it had been a little different in the school with her students and parents who, upon discovering she was married to an Inuit, become friendlier with her. Her students know she is married to an Inuit and she has children who are Native. Her students, however, did not locate her as Native because of her fair colouring. Beth notes talking about her husband and children breaks down barriers. She believes that Native staff members and the community accept her.

Tension #2 – Culture

Introduction

In this section, Beth's early experiences with celebrations such as Christmas were unpleasant and shrouded with the feelings of disillusionment. She commented on family parties that often involved drinking. This breakdown in relationship with her father contrasted with her relationship with John who gave her a life that was positive and relational. Beth said when she was accepted by the Inuit people, she said she felt she belonged somewhere culturally for the first time.

Lived Experiences Around the Tension of Culture

Thread #1: English as Beth's first language

Beth remembered her first experience with school. She said she was so extremely shy that she would pretend she was sick. She said she was afraid of being separated from her mother. She remembered when she was in Grade 1 that her teacher gave her a leading role in a play, "Robin Red Breast." This helped give her confidence, she said. Once she crossed this hurdle, she began to take an interest in school. She loved to read, although many of the stories were about middle class life. For example, she remembered learning to read from one of the staple books of the 1950s:

> *Do you remember those Dick and Jane books?? Spot?? I learned the sight words. I remember reading: "See Spot run." Yeah, we had those books.*

Beth said she remembered both of these incidents because at first it helped her to locate herself in the white culture. She could identify with the characters because they were all white, lived in houses, and life in general was positive and happy. But she said over time she knew it wasn't true within the walls of her home where she learned to become shy and anxious. As a result, she discovered that she could not identify with any of the characters in the books that portrayed a happy and balanced family life. Malena (1999) notes language "has to be learned by the human child, who in learning how to talk, also learns the ways he or she is different and identical to others in the family group and the community" (p. 9). For Beth, the English language permitted her to interact in her family and community but the social conventions she read about in books did not include the dysfunction in her family.

Thread # 2: Beth learns the Inuit culture

When Beth first went up North she went berry picking with her husband's family. It was one of her most vivid memories. She said,

> *It was a beautiful day. So gorgeous we walked up into the hills. It was probably one of those moments you feel contented like there is nothing wrong in the world. My husband was sitting down picking berries and the wind was just blowing in his hair. He looked so happy and my sister-in-law – the same thing. There were no words. No words had to be spoken between us because we were connected by nature, just by the day.*

Beth said that when she lived in the North the community considered her Inuit as soon as she was married to John. She said her children, her husband, and her Inuit relatives located her as white-looking but an Inuit woman. Beth informed me that there are many blond-haired and blue-eyed Inuit people. They have Norwegian roots. She said one of her Inuit friends is blue-eyed with blond-hair. Beth asserted she was considered part of the family. She learned the culture and showed interest. Beth said the Inuit people consider children who are half-white and half-Inuit to be Inuit. Beth noted within Inuit culture women are strong and central figures in the family. These women saw her children as Inuit and Inuit adults embrace their children. Wilfred (2000) says, "the assertion of difference is the way through which the marginal peoples come consciously to perceive and acknowledge their collective selves. In other words, the difference is crucial for the construction of their subjecthood as the principal agent of their emancipation" (p. 35). Beth recognized she was different from other white people. She no longer wanted to remain invisible in the pool of whiteness. She wanted to stand out and know a culture that better defined who she was. Dorais (2001) asserts that "the essential aspect of community life (is) the consciousness people share of belonging to the same, unique collectivity" (p. 102). Kawagley (1995), a native Alaskan, states that the "balance of nature, or ecological perspective, was of utmost importance to the Yupiag" (p. 15). Beth commented that this view of a balance of nature and a relationality to the natural and human environment was a common theme with her husband. Beth said the experience of relationality between the Inuit community and herself was new and exciting. It was an experience she wanted for her children since she never felt this kind of relationship within her own family.

She said she spent ten years in the North and felt she finally belonged some place. Her father's failing health brought her back to Leduc. Her husband applied for a position with a government agency and was promptly hired. Beth said she found it very difficult to adjust to the mainstream life she left behind. She felt "Inuit" even though she was still unable to speak the language fluently herself. She said she found the city fast-paced and people were too unfocused. It seemed to her that people in Edmonton were running around like "a bunch of ants in a big hurry." She said she found it was too much.

> *When I met John he sort of took the place of my father. I learned a lot from him and when I lived in the North I was very Inuit. I ate Inuit. I dressed Inuit. I was everything Inuit. I became part of his culture and I was just considered Inuit by all of the people of the community. As soon as I married him, I automatically was considered Inuit. They're accepting. How many cultures can you get married and all of a sudden you're Inuit too? I was considered just like him and then when the kids came along there was lots of role modeling for them for their culture but since we moved there isn't.*

Beth said she felt a lot of tension returning to Edmonton because she had located herself in the Inuit culture and did not feel part of white mainstream anymore. She was happy in the North and now being in the South meant that there would be different expectations from other people. She wasn't sure of what would happen to her. She said she wondered if she would fall back into the white culture of her parents and lose the Inuit culture that she adopted. She said she worried about her children and how much of the identifying Inuit culture they would lose. Beth said her husband never feared losing his Inuit culture for he saw himself as unique and "very" Inuit. She felt confused and lonely for the North. The North offered Beth a community.

Thread #3: Merging of cultures

Beth said she connected more with her husband's culture than her own. She believed his culture was more distinct and available and could not identify with any particular ethnic group.

> *I don't have to go looking for it. It's right there. That is part of my identity other than my family tree. On my Mom's side you have to ask if you want to talk about anything cultural, let's say from Sweden or England. I don't know why that is. I think if my great-grandmother, Irene, was still alive she would have had a lot to say about her cultural background, about being raised in Quebec and having Metis blood. I didn't get the opportunity to meet her so I am kind of a lost soul as far as Metis cultural identity. That is why I have taken on my husband's culture more. It's available to me, it was offered to me.*

Beth noted that once she decided to take on her husband's culture she began to see that there were things about it that she did not like. She said,

> *I only took what is good from the Inuit. I am not saying everything is good because my own sister-in law is too old fashioned for me. They think in ways I don't think, right? Boys should only be doing this and girls should only do that. It drives me insane. My mother-in-law, who is considered an elder, said something when she was down here in Leduc. I said, "No. That's not right, you know, just because you are an elder doesn't mean you know everything." And she had a hard time with that.*

This was a big step for Beth because she was challenging an Inuit cultural value. Beth said she found it difficult to accept the assumption that elders were "all-knowing ones." She said it frustrated her because some elders have passed on their "wisdom" and said things to children she found damaging. This was the first time that Beth had a conflict with her mother-in-law. She said she discovered that her modern views of gender roles conflicted with her mother-in-law's views that followed Inuit customs of differentiated roles for boys and girls. She felt a great deal of tension because while she loved her mother-in-law her stance on this issue put her at odds with her and created a small rift because she refused to accept everything an elder says as 100% true. This was one glaring instance in which Beth realized she could hybridize Inuit culture with her own ideas of childrearing.

Tension #3 - The Narrative Self

Introduction

Beth had negotiated a space for herself in which she was able to resolve some of the tensions of racial and cultural location. She began to understand that she could have it all. Beth said she could maintain her cultural ties to the Inuit culture as well as identify herself as Canadian. She also realized that it would be a lifelong job for her to educate people surrounding the issues of interracial marriages and relationships. Beth recalled how she felt her identity may have been fragmented and disjointed because of the distant relationship she felt she had with her father. She remembered playing with friends who had a distinct culture. She looked to her imagination, her brother, and her dog as centring influences when she was growing up. As an adult, she learned to centre herself in the Inuit culture when it opened up its arms to her.

Lived Experiences Around the Narrative Self

Thread #1: Facing death on the tundra

Beth said snow saved her life. It is interesting how she interpreted snow as an element that might have caused a disaster but was, in some way, a saviour. This is how it was with Beth's life. The feeling of emotional emptiness that she felt with her father as a child gave her an opportunity to become independent in her thinking. She "tried on" different ideas such as pretending to be a "woman of the land." Later on this independent thinking helped her cross boundaries. She said a near death experience helped her understand that Inuit cultural knowledge had much to offer "white" culture,

> *John and I were travelling on the ice road when we hit an ice heave. We became air-borne. We landed, rolled, and skidded into a huge bank of snow which the grader had ploughed. We stopped. Everybody was fine. We got out of our vehicle, tipped it back on its four wheels, got back in and continued on our way. I have a great respect for snow. If you are ever in a survival situation snow can insulate you from the cold, do all kinds of things for you. You can melt it. You can drink it. It's important.*

This was a near death experience for her. But Beth said that this attitude was a common one for the Inuit people. She said that the Inuit people made snow work for them because of their great respect and understanding of it. She said this event gave her a feeling of awe for the Inuit outlook. This was one of several incidents that helped establish a sense of identity for Beth. Beth said, "This is typical of people who live in the North. Life is harder. Nature expects a lot more out of you. Surviving and continuing on no matter the difficulty is what you learn." She said this incident only further reinforced her desire to know Inuit culture in a more meaningful way. Beth became aware of a space between Inuit and white culture and it allowed her to negotiate meaning for this terrifying incident. She commented, "Snow saved my life!" Throughout our conversations, Beth often related the snow as symbolic of her life's events. I was entranced by the multiple meanings of "snow." I wondered if the icy nature of snow spoke to the cold relationship between Beth and her father. I wondered if the snow when newly fallen was like a blanket covering up the tracks of hurt in her childhood. I found the imagery of snow so rich and it connected me to her life story.

Thread# 2: Beth's fit in Inuit culture

Beth maintained she was adamant about proving that racism was based on ignorance. She said there came a point in her life where she recognized that some ideas are totally ridiculous and it irked her that people would base their opinions strictly on skin colour. She decided not to be part of that thinking when she went to Enoch.

> *Where I fit in perfectly? I kind of always thought differently. I didn't think like other kids. I used to really have a wild imagination. I used to daydream all the time. Even just in your way of thinking you are either ostracized or accepted. You are either conforming to the way people are thinking or you're not and if you are not then you are taken out of your little pool in the middle. You're put over with Native people or out of the circle.*
>
> *When it came to other people and other cultures, the way the people who I was close to were thinking wrong. So I removed myself from that. I began to think in a different way. My family I think wondered, "What is wrong with her[illegible] Why is she thinking like this? Where did she get this from?" I was just thinking differently, more world-minded about things.*

Beth says there is constant conflict in her life because not everybody has sorted it out yet. She said,

> *You find the biggest and brightest way to make your statement. Mine was, I'll befriend Native people, I'll laugh and learn with Native people, I'll marry a Native person, and I'll raise Native children.*

Today, Beth still sees herself as "Heinz 57" with a new sense of what "Metis" means. She is proud of her Native roots and is willing to share this knowledge with other teachers. She is quick to note that colour sometimes is not the defining force behind culture. She has learned to appreciate her husband's culture and accepted a great part of it. She still holds onto much of her "mainstream" ideologies too, although these concepts are always open to negotiation. Eakin (1999) says "we can never expect to witness the emergent sense of self as an observable event precisely because it is an ongoing process, taking place mostly beneath our notice from day to day – and indeed, physiologically, moment by moment" (p. x). Beth commented her love for the Inuit culture was based on three things: Inuit offer their culture openly; they accept an individual freely; and, they perceive a relationality in people and in their environment. Beth said this cosmic design was so intricate and binding. This is what endures for her.

Chapter Seven

The Postcolonial Educational Landscape of a First Nations School

"Then the unicorns came out of the sea"
(Beagle, 1991, p. 192)

Opening up a Dialogue

Barone (2000) suggests that there is a "'breathing together,' a sharing of ideas and ideals for the purposes of an improved reality" when I, as reader, "ultimately resonate(s) with the interior vision of the text and (am) persuaded of its usefulness" (p. 146). The narrative inquiry space allowed such a place for conversations to flow between me and my participants. In asking questions and listening, I believe, we allowed each other to share comfortably and without rebuke. We often went off topic only to return to the research study. Our dialogue, which was crucial to our understanding about our experiences around race and culture, focused initially on questions surrounding family background, early childhood memories, experiences around school, cultural events and language, and finally, views on identity. However, throughout the research study, conversation kept coming back to four areas.

Four significant threads run through my narrative and through my participants' narratives. These threads have the wrappings of colonialism. The first thread that seemed significant was our location on a colonial landscape through our individual family history. Family history linked us to our racial and cultural roots and also served to point out the junction where colonialism began to shape our past. In my case, it revealed a severing point to my Ojibway roots through my great-grandmother and my mother. The second thread was related to our identification with "white mainstream culture" and traditions. We talked at length about our memories about Christmas, Halloween, Easter, and summer holidays. The third thread was our adoption of the English language as a first language. The last thread was our feelings of exclusion and marginalization as a result of differences in racial, ethnic, or cultural origins.

Thread One: Family History

Kanu (2003) asserts that "mass schooling and the curriculum were the vehicles through which the accomplishment of the cultural and psychological colonization of the 'other' was imagined" (p. 75). The residential school system virtually wiped out my mother's ties to her parents, relatives, and family history. My mother, I believe, was so silenced as a result of her own experiences as a child with her residential schooling that she became emotionally paralysed. However I encouraged my mother, while she was still alive, to retrieve her Treaty status. She did. This resulted in my becoming Treaty as well. Although, at the time, it did not make me "feel" more Ojibway, it nevertheless located me to a historical past. When I asked my participants to share their family history, they were eager to retrace their past. William spoke with pride about his family tree. He revisited those stories his mother told him about his ancestors' racism. He said he was proud that his mother taught him to treat people as individuals. Similarly, Mary felt pride in being told by her father that every Highlander kept genealogical records. It was even with pride that she shared stories about the Highlanders' ability to survive despite colonization by the British. Deanna felt pride in knowing her roots. She sought the help of her elderly aunt and was sent a family map from her relatives in Pakistan. She retraced her history and discovered that the British were instrumental in splitting her ancestral family. Although Beth is now searching for more information on her Cree roots, she says she is glad this research study led her to seek more information on the hidden part of her family history. In sharing our family histories, I believe, we felt a sense of belonging and a sense of racial and cultural location to our past. Witherell (1991) states that one's self is defined by "our relations with other persons" (p. 85). We are all parts of a web of relationships. I believe this was a healing aspect for all of us.

Thread Two: Identification with White Mainstream Culture and Traditions

I don't believe we are born with a culture. We are born into a culture. As children we become infused with it. In time, we identify with a particular culture in such a way that without it we can no longer exist without it, in a metaphysical sense. It is like a tree chopped into logs. The tree no longer exists as a tree although the parts are still there. Similarly, my own cultural history started with Canadian mainstream culture. It infused me as I was growing up. I understood the world in play, in school, in my home and in my dream world through the English language. I was attuned to its Eurocentric ideology. The link to William and Mary was quite strong when we began sharing our stories around Christmas and Easter. We were able to resonate to that level of knowing because we understood the inner workings of these Christian holidays. Differences in skin colour, at this point, did not seem to matter. When I listened to Deanna's account of

Christmas, I began to understand that culture can serve to erase, enrich, or transform the practices of another's culture. In Deanna's situation, while her parents still followed Muslim traditions, the display of the traditional Christmas tree in the home and Christmas lights in their front yard became a yearly event. Although these cultural artefacts represent only a commercial aspect to her father, it is difficult to assess how the story will end with their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. This pervasive power of a mainstream culture is also evident in the narrative of First Nations people. For example, the moment the first European introduced a technological wonder like the iron frying pan, Native culture changed forever. The traditional use of cookware, such as moose stomach for boiling food, vanished into antiquity.

Thread Three: Language and Culture

My first recognizable words, I am sure, were "Mummy" and "Daddy." My first memory of the written language was a nursery rhyme, followed by a flood of literature whose fabric was Eurocentric ideology. My first experiences with colonization, unknown to me as a child, was through literature and social texts that portrayed First Nations people as savages and heathens. My English language permitted my imagination access to the colonizer's ideology of explorations of new lands and new territories. I was David Stanley for about two years. William was able to do what I could only imagine. He set out to Papua New Guinea. His goal was to transcend a Prairie life that he found stifling by joining CUSO. He believed he would travel and learn about different cultures. Instead, he discovered that he was at the front row trying to "decolonize" a country in his own way. Once he realized that he needed to learn their language in order to communicate with his students, he found it much easier to take on more of its cultural makeup. I don't believe that William became Papua New Guinean. However, I do believe he developed some lasting connections to the culture and language.

Mary and I spoke at length about hearing a different language spoken at home but never learning it. Mary was convinced that the bits of Gaelic she heard and understood remained with her even today. We wished that we were raised with two languages. Beth's experience on Enoch Res [illegible] lped her take a critical view of mainstream culture and the language that breathed life into it. Deanna also was too young to understand the significance of losing her Urdu language. It was only in her young adult life that she regretted not knowing her Urdu language that would have allowed her to communicate with her grandmother. Similarly, I did not know that silencing the Ojibway language silenced the culture as well.

Thread Four: Exclusion and Marginalization

Beth said she began to understand what it felt like to be discriminated against when she met John. She expressed the horror she felt when she was told by her Uncle Tony that her children would never be accepted because they would look Inuit. William also expressed horror, and then panic, when he began to suspect his "whiteness" was despised by Papua New Guineans. He believed he would be left behind on a Pacific island because of his skin colour. Mary said she felt humiliation at being made an outcast. She said she was shocked when she was told to leave her friend's home to make way for members of her friend's clan. Deanna said, as a teenager, she portrayed herself as Lebanese in order to avoid the discrimination against those of Pakistani roots. She felt outraged at being categorized and as she called it "put in a box." She tried to understand the racial discrimination that the East Indian females had for her because they believed her fairer skin colouring permitted her easy access to a "good marriage."

I was outraged when I was sent out of my high school by Dr. Hagen. The discrimination was one of humiliation, anger, and a feeling of powerlessness. However, in thinking back, I need to further address the high school incident about Dr. Hagen. I recall my sister telling me then how Dr. Hagen caught her in the hallway one day. She said she froze. Then she relaxed when he praised her for the wonderful poem she wrote. "Oh, that's my sister!!" she responded. Dr. Hagen then instructed my sister to inform me that he was greatly moved and to keep on writing. One day, while I was sitting in Mr. Williams' classroom flipping through the magazines he left his students to read, I came across Dr. Hagen's note scrawled across the top of an article. Dr. Hagen wrote something to the effect that it was in this country he was beginning to recognize the immorality of Nazi ideology that he had practiced during the Second World War. Surprised, I put the magazine back and left the classroom. A few years later, when I was at North Bay Teacher's College, I ran across Dr. Hagen for the last time. He was selling school resources out of a run-down trailer. We smiled and greeted each other. Perhaps the connection we felt at that moment was a redemption for both of us.

Negotiating Teachers' Identities on the Postcolonial Landscape

How do teachers negotiate their identities on a postcolonial landscape? When I first heard the label of "apple" a week before I began my first year of teaching First Nations students in a northern Cree community I was appalled. Moreover, at that time I heard conversations about Metis people "passing for white." These two conceptualizations of Metis and Native people as "apple" and "passing for white" suggested to me an aura of inauthenticity. Even the expression of "having a foot in both worlds" suggested to me a deception. I began to think of my cultural enigma as a "cultural duality" to help me formulate an understanding of my "white" upbringing. However, my notion of "cultural duality" presented a riddle. I began to become confused about who I was and where I fitted in. Culture in this sense appeared static and unmoving. It seemed to define culture from a racial root. I remember hearing some teachers and community members laugh at a "white" individual who dressed "like a Native." I began to perceive how this individual's manner and dress were incongruent with their notion of what culture and race should be. I suddenly became aware that my presentation of Eurocentric values and knowledge probably also made me appear incongruous and possibly deceptive.

Bhabha's (1995) conceptualization of cultural hybridity allowed me to view my cultural enigma in a new way. I dropped the idea of a cultural duality because it only served to locate culture as a difference. When I read Ang (1994) I felt at home, for here was a researcher who experienced the same dilemma as I did. I began to realize that the cultural history of the Ojibway and even the cultural history of my students was overwritten by the introduction of a colonizer's history and language. I began to understand that there would be little chance of retrieving the cultural knowledge that was practiced by my ancestors. Cultural hybridity as a conceptualization helped me view culture as something that was fluid and permeable. When I began to think upon the differences between the Ojibway, French, and English cultures, and then wondered about what I was taking from each, I believed it was at this point in my reflection that I began to get a sense that I was negotiating something. I began to realize that while I was not taught very much of the Ojibway culture, there were still some teachings that were carried by my parents. For example, my grandfather's teaching of spirits in nature still is with me today. When I thought about the kind of knowledge my French great-grandfather might have passed down, I remembered at different parts of my childhood hearing my father speak French. I thought of my father eating sauerkraut and pigs feet, my mother serving New England type meals from a cookbook she inherited somewhere, my family listening to mass in Latin and so forth. I wondered how much of a mixture I was culturally. Wilson's (2002) conceptualization of cultural fusion suggests that individuals may never know the exact amount of their cultural meld. When I began thinking about the duality of cultures, I sensed a space of differences, a polarity. Within this space I began to think about what I knew about Ojibway culture and mainstream culture. I realized that it was an impossible task because whatever Ojibway values were passed down became invisibly woven within my Eurocentric ideology. When I came to terms with that, my struggle ended in a greater understanding of race and culture and its impact upon the formation of my identity.

I believe my participants and I experienced a change when we looked at the concept of cultural hybridity and incorporated it into our understanding of our colonial landscape. For example, in Beth's narrative, she describes herself as Heinz 57. Although Beth considered Metis as part of her racial background it wasn't until she was twenty-eight that she decided to examine it more closely. Beth negotiated a space for herself in taking the best of the Inuit and mainstream cultures and blending them as a new culture for herself and for her children. Mary, unlike Beth, said she felt there was a part of the Highlander culture that was embedded. She felt she had an originary culture that she wanted to be part of. Her discovery that she had fused both the Highlander and mainstream culture into one allowed her to take more cultural leaps such as inviting the Inuit culture into her repertoire of cultural mixing. Deanna believed she had to straddle two worlds. She discovered that those who could no longer identify with their parents' originary culture were called Oreos. She discovered that the boundaries separating Pakistani culture and white culture were permeable and capable of fusion. William, in his attempt at constructing situations whereby the Papua New Guineans could learn to do things for themselves, won the respect of his co-workers and students. I believe William's experience in Papua New Guinea has helped shaped his thinking about minorities and colonized people.

Relationality is an important element in crossing boundaries in race and culture. Mary had a sense of relationality with her father, her Grampee and the Micmac man and for what they represented. Her ease in crossing boundaries helped her fit into Inuit culture so much that she used it for one of our multicultural days. Beth's experience in

Enoch helped her respect Native people. She placed herself alongside. She became critical of the beliefs held by her community about aboriginal people. Her marriage to an Inuit proved that she had grown sufficiently enough to cross borders. William developed a deep relationship with his students in Papua New Guinea. His experience with babies helped him with this bonding. He found the babies innocent and their minds clear of prejudices. He also saw a relationality between mother and child different from his own childhood upbringing. Today he reads about the political climate in the country and one day hopes to return there, even for a visit. Deanna came from a strong and supportive home and community. She developed a relationality with her family but discovered that this was not so evident when she went back to Pakistan to visit her grandmother. The relationality she hoped to experience was diminished by not knowing Urdu. The notion of relationality underpinned my participants' narratives.

Spindler and Spindler (1994) speak of a situated self, the one that is present and experiencing living right now. Pinar (1994) and Taylor (1989) speak to a self that is always evolving and transforming. Goodson (1998) even goes as far as saying that the self is "an ongoing narrative project." Writing my autobiography helped me gain insight into my own unresolved issues around race and culture. I wrote the autobiography within the context of the narrative inquiry space. Within the space, I travelled to what I remembered about my origins. I chose a journey starting with memories of my childhood, adolescence, and teaching life. I discovered that I was no longer looking at an identity so much as a narrative self. This sometimes painful venture gave me insight into the journey that each of my participants would be going through. I realized that I needed a "conversational partner" (Taylor, 1989) to fully work out my reflection and understanding of the issues surrounding race and culture. I realized that our attitudes and beliefs remained hidden in shadows that spoke loudly in our relationships with our students in surprising ways. My participants and I realized that we needed to take the journey to discover the complexities about race and culture. I wonder if other teachers learn how to negotiate their identities by travelling through this narrative inquiry space to search for their own understandings of race and culture. Each of the narrative threads that focused on racial and cultural tensions were woven through each narrator's experiences.

Revisiting Multiculturism

Mainstream culture as viewed by the participants and myself primarily carries these characteristics: Anglo-Saxon, English-speaking, Christian/Protestant, and employable. Although there appears a shift in the overall makeup of mainstream culture, as evidenced, for example, by the number of "ethnic" foods in stores and Japanese script in banks, I believe these are cosmetic changes. I think white mainstream culture, as defined above, endures in political arenas, acceptable religions, economic power, and all aspects of everyday life. In our multicultural events at our school we insisted that interested teachers put up a display representing their cultural roots. I recalled asking several "white" teachers for their participation but they refused, saying that they had no culture. When I pushed further and asked what would be a dominant culture they would often say they were too far removed from that particular culture to really talk about it. It never occurred to me then that I was expected to display Ojibway culture even though I was as much removed from it as they were from their heritage cultures. In fact, I was stared at when I said I would have to get some information. Giroux (1992) states, "Questions of representation and inclusion suppress any attempts to call into question the norm of whiteness as an ethnic category that secures its dominance by appearing to be invisible" (p. 117). Like hooks (1990) who stated that as the colonized we should begin to interrogate "whiteness," Giroux (1992) claims

> critical educators need to move their analyses and pedagogical practices away from an exotic or allegedly objective encounter with marginal groups and raise more questions with respect to how the dominant self is always present in the construction of the margins. (p. 117)

Hence, we move away from multiculturalism as a display artefact with our one day event of clothing, resources, imagined histories. hooks (1994) states "such a pedagogy is not an interrogation of the biases conventional canons . . . but yet another form of tokenism" (p. 39).

Britzman, Santiago-Valles, Jiménez-Múñoz, and Lamash (1993) state that, "the point is that sociality is governed by relations of power, and relations of power regulate the self" (p. 190). Deanna felt exotic, different but not in a positive way. She understood that whiteness was a benchmark for racial, social, and economic power. Her sari outfit only demarcated her from everyone else. My own experience in trying to locate myself as an Ojibway and making a fool out of myself because I did not know my culture lowered my self-esteem. I think I would have felt better if I was raised as an Ojibway with knowledge of the culture, even if I spoke the language. I felt it demeaning to make a mythical past a reality by putting on a show about it.

Creating a Healing Space

hooks (1994) states, "in much of my writing about pedagogy, particularly in classroom settings with great diversity, I have talked about the need to examine critically the way we as teachers conceptualize what the space for learning should be like" (p. 39). I believe when we understand our postcolonial landscape we are better able to help those who are still trying to make something of the puzzle they find on their own landscape. It seems our values, biases, attitudes, and beliefs spring out in our interjections, responses, reactions and the way we conduct ourselves in the classroom. I discovered some ways in which I believe I could create a more loving and safe place for my students this coming year.

I read enormously as a child never realizing that much of what I read then was Eurocentric in nature. Similarly, William commented that his mother at times overwhelmed him with books. He was read to and encouraged to listen to the radio. When he learned to read he was expected to travel through a vast range of material all of which was Eurocentric. Deanna said she could find nothing on Pakistani literature when she was growing up. Beth affirmed that she tried to compare the white middle-class life that appeared happy in books to her own sometimes chaotic home life. I identified with the characters in books. I saw the difference in the lives of characters in books and believed my own family were not living up to what was portrayed. The border between reading these texts and the sense of who I was developing, my narrative self, was permeable at this age. Like the young Deanna, I never realized then that "racist texts diminished non-white's humanity" (Mukherjee, 1998).

Ghosh (1996) says,

> the idea is not to rid the curriculum of a male, Eurocentric perspective but to extend it to include other world views. Exposure to different cultures and countries, to women's lives, to the working class will lead to new knowledge. It also means relearning old knowledge and disengaging from some ways of doing things that are no longer relevant. (p. 43)

Moving from reading even Eurocentric texts to actually writing about my own experiences helped move me from taking the experiences of characters of an established Eurocentric canon. Reliving and writing about my own experiences permitted me a voice. I was about nine years old when I began writing, bits and pieces of what I thought were poetry. I discovered how important it was for me to write about my own experiences, to listen and to read about the experiences of my participants. I believe that this discovery of narrating should be extended to the classroom. I found the process in this research study a healing one for me because I was able to share my own narratives around race and culture, deal with the memoried pain, and put them in a context, in my case, a postcolonial landscape. Storying is an effective way of reaching students. Ghosh (1996) states that "teachers must help all students define their own worlds, speak their languages, and reflect on their experiences" (p. 50).

I believe that healing could occur among our students' curricula. Some changes have already taken place within our band-controlled school such as language learning and cultural events. Ghosh (1996) says that "infusion means permeating the entire school curriculum with the lives, experiences, works, attributes, and dreams of those traditionally left out" (p. 44). Similarly, Kanu (2003) believes that "imagined, curriculum reform" involves "the need to find abiding links that connect groups across ethnic affiliations, geographical origins, and locations" (p. 78). This infusion is not only confined to student knowledge but also to methodology.

In her own research study, Kanu (2002) states that in "indigenous Aboriginal culture traditional stories, legends, songs, and many other forms of knowledge are passed on among generations by continual retelling" (p. 107). This is one part of our school curricula that is being revised. Teachers are encouraged to invite elders in to tell stories to our students and I believe students should be writing their stories for the elders. This meeting place is crucial to both parties because I suspect the thread that connects the child-elder relationship sometimes breaks down here. Ghosh (1996) says, and I believe it is applicable to our students, that "it is more important for first- and second-generation immigrant students to deal with their present lived experiences as members of minorities in their communities rather than to relate to a homeland that they or their parents left behind" (pp. 50-51). Sumara and Davis (1998), in their research study, discovered that when the community and students got together to read a certain text it bonded them even more tightly because it allowed both parties to share and understand each other better.

This reminds me of my relationship that developed with each participant. Sumara and Davis say that their research work on shared reading,

> transgressed the conventional boundaries that are so often used to separate school from community, student from teacher, reader from text, past from present, academic from personal. All of these were caught up in the *commonplaces* of the shared reading, the classroom collective, the community. (p. 88)

Over the years as I have lingered on in this band-controlled school, I have come to know this about my students: they have strengths, a desire for learning, pride in getting good marks and winning awards for citizenship, a sense of values in the way they show kindness to each other and to their elders, a renewed desire to learn their language, and for some an amazing knowledge and practice of their Cree culture. I could also say I know the Cree community who have come in our school and lent their support. Bauman (1999) notes that we need to get rid of the stranger imagery and "to live with them daily and permanently." After working eleven years at this band-controlled school, I no longer see my students as strangers. It has changed my own way of teaching and it has changed how my students treat me.

I have gained many new insights around questions of cultural identity in teachers' narratives of experience, through my own autobiographical reflections and in conversation with my participants. These insights have informed my practice as a teacher and as a researcher. I am left with lingering questions about the First Nations students I teach. While I believe that I have learned to see myself as a culturally fused individual not restricted by my racial roots and believe I am no longer haunted by the perceptions of others, I wonder about the future of my students' sense of identity as Cree/mainstream. I wonder about the following: How do First Nations students perceive their own postcolonial landscape? What kinds of stories would our students share if given an opportunity to enter into a narrative space of their own? What are the implications for a multi-ethnic school landscape? I believe it is essential for teachers, including myself, to achieve a better understanding of our First Nations students and the postcolonial landscape on which they live, by presenting a methodology that would allow for such a journey.

EPILOGUE

When I returned to my teaching position this fall, I was asked to facilitate a workshop. The intent of the workshop was to look at ways of improving communication among the Four Band schools as well as describe some of the difficulties we experience within our classrooms. At some point during the discussion, our thoughts and feelings meandered in a different direction. Lorraine suddenly brought up her feelings of being racially discriminated against by the parents of her students. Jennifer, a member of one of the Four Bands, reacted immediately. She pointed out that she had often shopped in Ponoka and Wetaskiwin, two neighbouring towns, aware that "white" staff followed her around to see if she was stealing. She noted that this same staff did not do that to "white" customers. At this juncture, I spoke up and remarked, "Jennifer, I know how you must feel. First Nations people have been victims of racism. This seems to be part of the systemic pattern of colonialism." I turned to Lorraine. "I think I know how you must be feeling. I have heard this same story before from new teachers who are considered white by the parents of the students they teach. I believe that the parents resent you for what you represent – whiteness. Whiteness appears to be the main marker in colonialism." I surprised myself. All the struggles in trying to understand theories and writing to an academic standard eased the way for my sharing and increasing awareness that racism, stereotyping, and a sense of disempowerment continue to reside in our schools. That moment of sharing made me further aware that we need to continue our discourses on race and culture.

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